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and other stories

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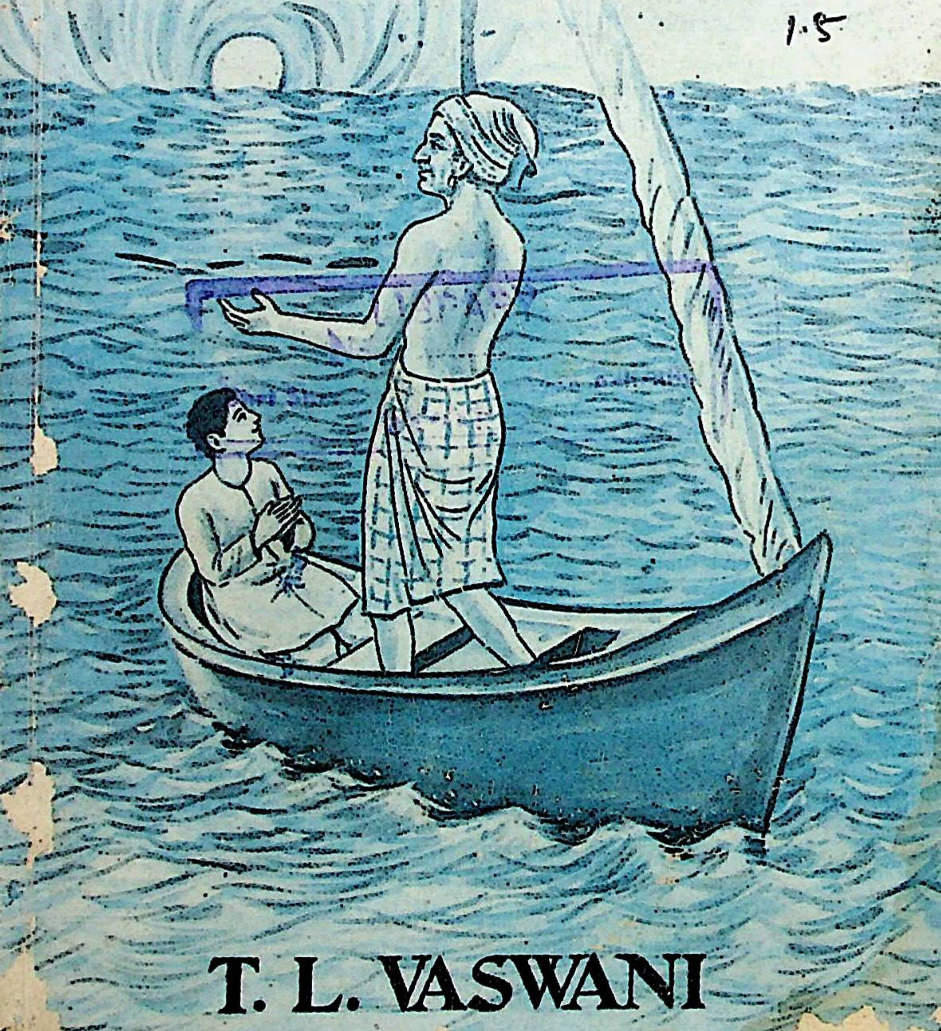

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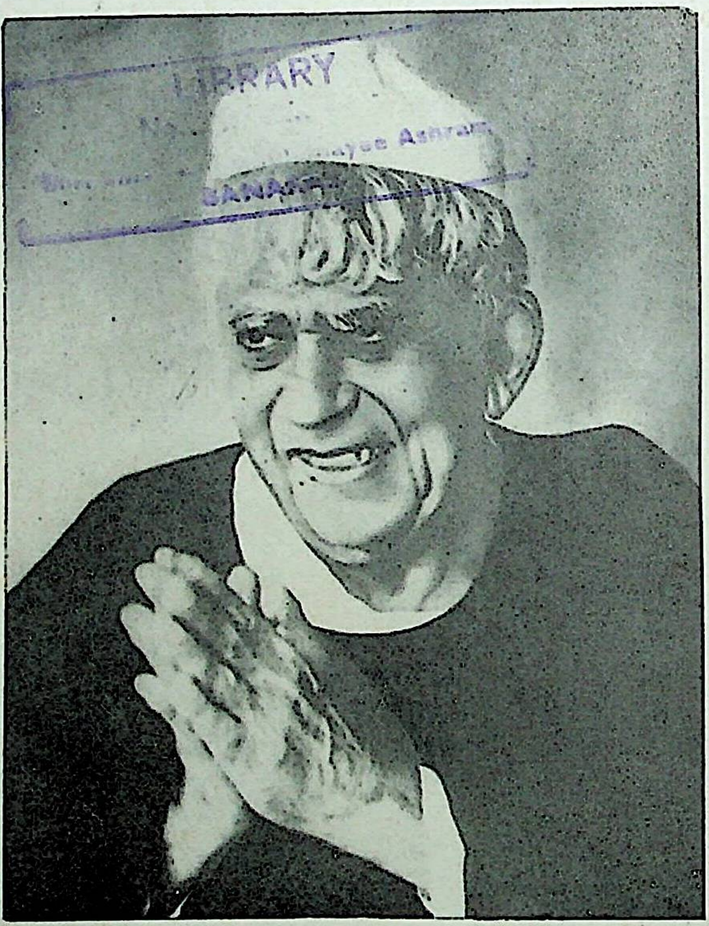

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EAST AND WEST SERIES

[Nos. 218-220]

A BOY IN QUEST OF GOD
and other stories

by

T. L. VASWANI

ISSUED ON THE OCCASION OF
Sri T. L. VASWANI'S 96th Birthday

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IMPORTANT

Kindly note that this is a combined issue for the three months,—November, December, 1975 and January, 1976.

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—*The Manager*

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Foreword

Here is a book of stories,—for children and adults.

Treasured in the heart of Beloved Dada* were many stories of the Great Ones who have blessed humanity, age after age. Some of them have been brought together in the following pages.

Jesus and Buddha, Nanak and Kabir, the great teachers and inspirers of humanity have taught through stories and parables. Stories appeal directly to the human heart and carry meaning even to simple, unlettered men. Of Jesus we read that when he gave his teaching in the form of a parable, "the people were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught as one having authority and not as the scribes."

Every story is a picture. And every picture, in the words of Beloved Dada, is a teacher. In the pictures that are unfolded in the following pages, are glimpses of saints and prophets, heroes and holy men, servants of suffering humanity. These pictures should be of value to us, today, when atheistic secularism seems to have captured the minds of many, all over the world. And young men and women in India and other countries, feeling frustrated, ask:—"Is life worth living?"

---

* Sri T. L. Vaswani

An answer to this question is given in the stories that are woven together in this volume. To everyone who is in quest of the meaning of life, these stories declare :—"Bless all, and serve the poor and needy, the forsaken and forlorn, and adore the Holy spirit within your heart,—and you will find that life is well worth living !"

May the message of these stories touch our hearts and awaken some of us to the reality and beauty of the dedicated life,—the life that is life, indeed! It is a life which, even in this excited, agitated age, continues to draw an ever-increasing number of men and women in India and other countries. India is a poor country. Yet beneath the poverty of India's villages burns a fire,— a fire of the spirit,— which no "secular state" can quench. Many of India's village-folk still lie in destitution. But in their hearts is aglow the light of the spiritual culture which made India great in the long ago : and on their lips is awake the *bani*, the Word of the Saints and Singers of the Name of God. One of them was Namadeva, the tailor who sought refuge at the Lotus-feet of the Lord, and became a prince of *bhaktas*, devotees of God. He sang a number of soul-stirring songs. One of them,—enshrined in the *Granth Saheb*,—was very dear to Beloved Dada. It is eloquent with the message of the dedicated life. Namadeva sings:—

Blind am I :
But Thy Name is my staff, O Lord :
Poor am I, most poor !
With anguish in my heart, I cry :

My bread is Thy Name Divine!
The flowing river of my life art Thou:
Immense is Thy wealth:
Thou givest increasingly,—
Thou, the Giver Supreme!
Wisdom art Thou,—
The wisdom beyond the knowledge of books.
Beloved! Thou art Namadeva's Lord!
Lord of his life, Breath of his breath!
And Thou dost forgive,
As Thou dost give for ever and ever!

J. P. VASWANI

A Boy in Quest of God

A boy asks his father:—"Can I see God?"

"No!" says the father. A rough answer!

And the boy sheds tears. He feels sad in his heart. He goes to the woods and ponders. He watches the birds building their nests. He gazes at the trees. He looks up through the branches,—longing to see God. He wanders : he cries!

Days pass by. Summer arrives and, in summer, he meets an old fisherman. The boy becomes his friend. The fisherman is so simple and, from time to time, he takes the little boy with him in his boat.

One day, the father of the boy asks him:—"My boy, how are you spending your time now?"

And the boy says:—"Father, I have a good friend in an old fisherman."

"What kind of man is he?" asks the father; "what does he talk about?"

And the boy says:—"Father, he does not talk much. Last night, I was with him in the boat, drifting down the river. The sun was setting,—how red, how beautiful! He gazed at the setting sun, father, and I saw his eyes were touched with tears!"

The next evening, this simple, old, kindly fisherman takes the boy again in the boat, and the fisherman gazes and gazes and gazes again at the setting sun : and there are tears again in the old man's eyes. The boy comes near to the fisherman. The old man does not turn his head : he is silent, gazing at the setting sun! And the boy draws yet nearer and touches the arm of the fisherman and says to him:—"I would not ask anybody else the question which I put you!"

The old fisherman says nothing. His eyes are still fixed,—on the setting sun.

The boy now presses the question:—"Can you see God?"

No answer. The boy pulls at the old man's shirt and says:—"Won't you tell me? Can anyone see God?"

Then the fisherman turns his lovely, tear-touched face to the boy. The face is radiant with a strange, mystic light. And the fisherman says gently, quietly, tenderly:—"My child! It's getting so : I see nothing but God!"

The simple, old fisherman was a *yogi!* This is the experience, the thrill, the rapture of the true *yogi*:—"I see nothing but God."

Men ask:—"Where is God?" The *yogi* asks:—"Show me where God is not!"

In the King's Presence

Two men were invited to appear before the king of their place. The name of one man was Cassian and that of the other was Nicholas. Both were asked to meet their king.

Cassian comes first. And the king says to him:— "What did you see on the way?"

And Cassian says:— "Sire! on the way I saw a peasant floundering with his wagon in the marsh."

And the king asks:— "What did you do?"

"Sire!" says Cassian, "I felt I was coming into the presence of the king and I was afraid the mud might soil my garments, and so I came away without helping the poor peasant."

Then comes Nicholas covered with mud from head to foot. And the king says to him:— "Nicholas! why are you soiled and stained in my presence?"

And Nicholas says:— "Sire! on the way I saw a peasant struggling with his wagon in the marsh. And I said, whatever the call, I still must serve the poor. And so I stopped to help the peasant and, in helping him out of the marsh, my clothes were covered with mud."

And the king says:— "Welcome, Nicholas! Thrice welcome! Thou hast honoured the king."

He honours the King of kings, who appears before Him soiled with the mud of service.

Blessed are the Merciful!

Arishtanemi is a prince. When young, he is betrothed to a princess, Rajimati, a daughter of King Ugrasena. The prince, followed by a procession, is proceeding to the palace of Ugrasena. On reaching the king's gate, Arishtanemi hears loud sounds. He asks his charioteer:— "What mean these sounds?"

And the charioteer says:— "Sire! these sounds are cries of the animals whom the king has kept confined, and they will be shortly killed and served as meat to your bridal procession."

The prince is surprised to hear this. He immediately gets down from his car. He tells the charioteer to take him to the place where the animals are kept confined. "Set them free!" he says to the charioteer.

And they are set free!

"Tell No Man My Name!"

He was wealthy at one time. But he lost all his money.

And he did not know how to give his daughters in marriage. They were three. He had no dowry to offer. He had not one small coin to buy bread for them.

And he wept, and he cried in a closed room:—"What shall I do?"

And there was in the town a true servant of the poor,—Dinabandhu. He heard of the sufferings of the man with three daughters. And to his house went at night this servant of the poor. The three daughters slept : the father was up, keeping vigil.

The sky was covered with clouds, and through a rift the moon did shine for a moment on the poor man's house. Dinabandhu quietly dropped in the house a purse filled with gold.

The purse fell at the father's feet. His joy knew no bounds. "This be the marriage portion of my eldest daughter," he said.

And the next night, Dinabandhu came again and dropped quietly in the house the second purse with gold.

What joy filled the father's heart! "This be the gift for my second daughter," he said.

A third time came Dinabandhu, and in his quiet way dropped the third purse with gold in the poor man's house.

The father was anxious to know who the benefactor was. The father was watching to discover the man whom Providence had sent to help his daughters.

And, as Dinabandhu came the third time, he was caught by the father who said :— "O, thou the servant of the poor, why dost thou hide thyself?"

And Dinabandhu said to the father:— "Brother, all gifts are from Him, the All-Giver! Glorify Him and tell no man my name!"

●

The Temple with the Golden Dome

One day, Narottama comes to Mathura and stays there for some days. To the King of Mathura comes the minister in charge of royal buildings and the temples in the realm and says:— "Your Majesty's Temple has been built in beauty : it is the noblest building in the realm. But the Temple is empty!"

"Why?" asks the king, vexed at heart.

"A saint is come from Brindaban. He is a devotee of Sri Krishna. He was, at one time, a prince. He calls himself a servant of the Lord. The people call him Narottama."

"Yes," says the king, "I know the name. His father had two palaces on the river-bank. He was my friend. What about Narottama?"

"Sire!" the minister says, "Narottama has not entered your great Temple even once. He sits under the trees by the open road : and sitting there, he sings the Name of Krishna, day and night. And thousands throng to join the Saint in his worship underneath the trees. Your Temple, sire! is a deserted place."

The king's announcement goes forth to the people that they who will join in the worship in the Temple, twice a day, will receive one gold *mohur*. But they accept not the offer of the king.

"Our place," they say, "is by the side of the Saint underneath the trees by the open road."

The king is deeply distressed to find that his Temple is deserted still. He goes himself to the spot where sits the Saint on the grass-covered ground.

The king says to Narottama:— "Father of us all are you, O Saint of God! Your name is known to me. Your father was my friend. I come to tell you that a Temple seeks you. It is built under my orders : it has a golden dome. Why are you here in the dust ? I request you to come and worship the Lord in the Golden Temple."

"I cannot offer worship there!"

"What is the reason, O Saint of God?"

"Because," says Narottama, "Krishna is not there!"

The king is annoyed and says:— "You know not, O Saint! that I have spent crores of rupees to build it. And it has been consecrated to Krishna with costly rites. The *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Bhagavata* were recited to bless it, and *sutras* and *slokas* were read to purify the grounds and the spacious Hall."

Narottama says:— "Sire! I know your Temple has cost crores of rupees : but it is not beautiful, for Krishna is not there. Thousands of your people stood at your door for help : their houses had fallen down in the floods. They asked for food : they asked in vain ! You turned them out of your palace doors. And you ordered, too, that your Golden Temple was not open to the poor but only to the comfortable and the rich. And my Master said to me:— 'This King who has turned the poor out of his Temple has turned Me out. My dwelling is in the cottages of the poor!' So it is, sir, I worship the Lord under these trees by the open road!"

"Sire!" the Saint says further, "I cannot come to your Temple: it is but a bubble of vanity. My place is at the Lotus-feet of the Lord. And He dwells not where the poor are not present to give their benedictions!"

The king's anger knows no bounds, and he says:— "Narottama! you cannot stay in my realm! Depart!"

Narattoma with a gentle smile on his lips departs, saying:—"Sire! I go where dwells the God of the poor!"

And the Temple with the Golden Dome continued to be empty until it crumbled to the dust !

"I cannot offer worship there.
What is the reason, O Saint of God.
Because, says Narottama,
"Krishna is not there!"
You know not O Saint that I
have spent lakhs of rupees to
build it. And it has been
consecrated to Krishna
with costly rites. The Bhagavad Gita
and the Bhagavatam were recited to
bless it and Kirtans and Slokas
were recited to. purify the grounds
and the spacious. Hall.

Who Knocks at the Door?

She is a village girl. They name her Daya. Every day, she takes her father's cattle to the grazing ground. Every evening, she returns with song and music on her lips.

One day, while alone in the grazing field, she hears Voices in the void.

Whence are they? What do they signify?

The next evening, as she returns, she looks into the waters. She gazes at a Vision. She hears a Voice, saying:— "Krishna! Krishna!"

On reaching her house she meets her mother, and asks:— "Who is Krishna? Where is He?"

The mother answers: — "Krishna is the Lord of Life. And in the Forest dwells He."

Daya gets no sleep at night. Her thoughts are filled with Him, the Lord of Life. In the house they are all asleep.

Daya gently bows at the feet of her father and mother.

Daya looks tenderly at her brothers and sisters.

Daya stands on the threshold.

Then, with eyes gleaming with love, she looks once more at her father and mother and brothers and sisters. In the dark of the night, she ventures out alone,—to meet Krishna in the Forest !

She enters the Forest. She shouts out thrice:—"Krishna! Thou art a Forester! I come to dwell with Thee, Lord of Life!"

But there comes to her a Voice from the woods:—"Return to thy home! Not in the Forest mayst thou find Me!"

Daya, obedient to the Voice, returns. And, day after day, she hears the Voice, not knowing what It means.

Again and again, she moves out to see : but the Vision is not there!

* * *

It is noon. There is a knock at the door.

Daya gets up to open the door. What does she see? A poor, old, shrunken widow.

"Mother!" asks Daya, "what may I do for you?"

"I am thirsty," says the widow, "and I have hungered the whole day: and I have not a piece of cloth to cover my half-naked body."

Daya enters her kitchen and prepares meals. Daya opens her box and takes out a garment given her by her mother some days ago and intended to be worn by her on special occasions.

Daya places the meals and the garment at the feet of the old woman.

Then Daya goes to fetch water. She returns. "Mother!" she says, "here is water!"

And she presses the cup to the widow's lips.

When, lo! the widow is not there! Nor her little cottage!

A beautiful house suddenly rises to view. Shining lights are there. And music floods the place. And in the house is seated Krishna playing upon the Flute!

Daya falls at His feet.

Krishna blesses her and says:—"That poor old widow was my *rupam* (form).

"I was thirsty, and thou didst give me water to drink.

"I was hungry and thou didst feed me.

"I was naked, and thou didst clothe me.

"My vision is thy reward."

Is this story a parable?

Who knocks at India's door with pale face and hungry eyes?

Behold! thirsty and hungry and naked stands Krishna,—the Comrade of the poor !

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The Buddha and the Prince

Thus have I heard:—

The Buddha was a lover of mountains, rivers and forests. On hills and in forests did he spend periods of silence. They were periods of meditation. He would sit there with the birds near him. He loved them as his brothers. They loved him and felt happy in his presence,—so full was it of peaceful vibrations. The Buddha's presence breathed out benediction to all.

There comes to him, one day, a young man, fair of face and full of grace : and clad in purple robes. He is a prince. He is in quest. Who will give him the light he seeks,—the light on life's problem? He has heard of the Buddha,—the prince of the Great Heart who left his palace and went into silence for six long years and practised *tapasya* and triumphed over Mara and won the Secret.

To the Buddha in the forest comes the young prince. He prostrates himself before the Lord and says:—"Master, a prince and heir to my father's throne am I. I come to thee, for thou art a physician of the soul. Accept me as thy disciple!"

The Buddha is silent. The Master is the Brother of the poor and outcaste. The prince is clothed in purple robes.

The prince speaks again:—"Master, speak to me, for I seek thee. Scriptures have I read, and I am versed in the lore of rites and ceremonies. Accept me as thy disciple!"

Scripture-reading avails little. And empty rites connot fill the hunger of the soul.

The prince gazes at the Blessed One and says:—"Master, what shall I do to be accepted as thy disciple?"

And the Buddha's answer is brief:—"Strive,—and thou shalt attain!"

The prince says:—"Master, I shall strive and return. When may I see thee again?"

And the Buddha says:—"After the rainy season is over."

The months of the rainy season slowly pass away. The prince is out again in search of the Buddha. He is sitting in a little mud-house. The prince prostrates himself before the Buddha and says:—"Master, I have striven and now return to be thy disciple!"

And the Buddha smiles and asks:—"Have your striven?"

"Master!" says the prince, "I went back to the palace and I renounced rich foods and worldly pleasures, and I kept far from my wife, rebuking her for not obeying me more than once, and I slept on the floor, and I pinched my body, and I woke up many a night and looked for the

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Light. The Light has not yet come!"

The Buddha says:—"I preach not asceticism. My doctrine is of the Middle Path. Go back! Not yet mayst thou be my disciple!"

The prince, with tears in his eyes, asks:— "Master, wherein have I failed? Have I not striven hard?"

The Buddha, with eyes radiant with compassion, says:—"Your wife committed a fault, and you rebuked her more than once : you did not understand her : you were not patient with her. You strove hard,—but not in love. They who strive truly are from anger free : in their hearts is compassion more copious than waters in the sea. You tried to be pure. But purity is not enough. Purity must shine with the light of love. Else purity may lead to pride."

Is not the story a parable? Yes,—purity is not enough ! Purity must be illumined by love. Some time ago, I saw Himalayan peaks touched with light. How lovely they looked ! Purity is a peak : love is a light,—the Light of lights! ●

A Muslim Yogi

One day, a strange, mystic impulse stirs Parasi. He leaves his cottage. His Home is elsewhere. He goes to a forest. He stays there for some years. His soul ripens : he learns to meditate: he teaches himself self-control. And he makes the supreme discovery that the world and its pleasures pass away : the Eternal alone is.

Again and again, you may find him speaking to himself, telling his body:—"I will not let you have what you clamour for!" The body clamours for comfort : the body would fain keep away from work and toil : and the body would like to be lazy or indulge in luxury. So this great *bhakta* teaches his body to be moderate in eating and sleep. Eating much and sleeping much are sins against the spiritual law of moderation. A few morsels of food are enough for him. One day, he is tempted to eat one more morsel. Then he repents: he sheds tears. He tells his body:—"Break not the divine rule of moderation, if thou wilt grow in health and radiance." And he teaches his body, also, to be simple in dress. For some days, he wears leaves of trees,—and feels happy!

So in the forest he lives, in silence and in fellowship with birds and animals, with trees and flowers, with the stars and the running brook. He grows in fellowship with nature. He learns simplicity,—the secret of the radiant life. He learns meditation,—the secret of the saints. His face grows in beauty. His heart grows in sympathy and the power of understanding. He sings : he dances : he weeps : he cries, again and again:—"Be Thou not afar, my Lord! But keep me at Thy Feet always!"

He becomes a yogi. He sees the Light : he hears Voices within him. And one day, a Voice says to him:—"Finished are thy labours, my child! Return to thy native place and open there a School of spiritual wisdom. For unhappy are men and they long for a message of hope and healing!"

One day, a man comes to Parasi and says:—"Master! I have a longing to feed you : won't you come to my house? It will be blessed by your presence."

The next day, he goes there. He is a Muslim, but he eats no flesh : yet he does not compel members of his School to give up eating flesh. He believes that life teaches better than lips : and a servant of God must impose nothing on others, but only bear witness to the truth and beauty of the higher life.

The Yogi now sits down to meals. He hardly puts the first morsel in his mouth when he finds that it is a piece of flesh. He immediately takes it out and exclaims:— "Blessed be the Lord!" He washes his mouth. He quietly gets up and says to his host:— "Brother! you have been kind. You have prepared for me food in love. I accept it. You did not know, brother! that I take no flesh. But you have given me love in abundance. Blessed be the Lord!"

Then he talks to his host of spiritual life and the way to wisdom. The host has no food to offer to the Yogi. But his talk hath lent new beauty to the meeting : his talk hath opened to the host a treasure of man's divine heritage. He is a new man! And the Yogi returns home, repeating the *mantra*:—"Blessed be the Lord!"

This one truth he teaches, again and again, and he teaches it with power, because he lives it in his daily life. "Let not your hearts be troubled," he says; "but in all stations of life, say:— 'Blessed be the Lord!' And if your bodies be sick or in pain, say:— 'Blessed be the Lord!' For, nothing happens without the Will of Allah. Not a leaf stirs, not a hand moves, not an eye winks, not a tongue tells, not an ear hears, without the Will of Allah. To walk the Will of Allah is religion."

●

The Story of a Learned Man

There is a beautiful saying of a Greek Rishi:— "A man's true wealth may be estimated in terms of the things he can do without." The richer a man's soul, the simpler his life! History shows that simplicity has a survival value. Greece and Rome perished of luxury,— parent of *bhoga* (sense-indulgence) and immorality. India was great when she was simple.

There is a story of a learned man. He published many books. One day he goes to a village. He stays there for a few days in a friend's house. His friend's girl accompanies him on the last day to the railway station to see him off. On the way she asks him:— "Sir ! you have written many books. What is it you seek?"

"I seek fame!" he says. "And what do you seek?"

She Pauses for a minute or two. Then says this simple girl:—"After seeing you off at the station, sir! I shall go to yon cottage. There dwells a widow. She is ill and poor. I shall sweep her room and cook for her and get her medicine and give her some money. You seek fame. I seek service."

"Not fame but service!" is the motto for us, if we would help society. For the path of renunciation is the path of love: and to love is to be humble. Our differences, born of pride and hate, have wounded India with many wounds. In sacrifice is the power of healing. In unity with the poor and the outcast is the secret of strength.

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God is Silence

When a student asked a Rishi, "What is God?" the Rishi was silent.

The student repeated his question. The Rishi was silent again.

When pressed once more, the Rishi answered:—
"Beloved! have I not answered you already? God is Silence!"

Be Ye Lights!

Sometime ago, I saw a beautiful picture painted by a Hindu artist,—a picture of the passing of the Buddha. Wise was he,—the Buddha,—wise beyond the wisdom of the schools : wise and strong and pure and full of compassionate love for all creatures. He, too, must leave the world. And in the picture, you see him stretched on the ground, —a simple, white sheet covering his body. And by the Master are standing a few disciples, one of them his best beloved disciple, Ananda. Ananda was to the Buddha what John was to Jesus. Ananda is weeping, for the Master is passing away.

"Weep not," says the Blessed One.

Then speaks Ananda:—"Master! now you go, leaving us in a world broken, forlorn, bereft of beauty. Give unto us, Master! thy parting message."

Then speaks the Buddha. He speaks two little words as his parting message. The Buddha says:— "*Atta dipa !*"

And these two Pali words mean:— "Be ye lights!" So the ancient Rishi prayed:— "*Tamaso ma jyotir gamaya !*" "From darkness lead me into the Light !"

It is a prayer we all need to pray:— "Lead us from darkness into the Light."

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Broken Cups

Sri Krishna was invited, one day, by a disciple to go and dine with him. The Lord of Love readily consented, knowing that the request came from one who was poor and lowly of heart.

Sri Krishna, after finishing his meals, asked for a glass of water. The disciple brought him water in a shining, glittering vessel.

Sri Krishna said:—"Not for me this shining, glittering vessel. I must drink water in a broken cup !"

The Lord wants broken cups,—men who would be poor in spirit and walk the ways of *tapasya* (self-control).

The Heavenly Beggar

Alfred the great was in exile. His mother was with him. A beggar came asking for food. There was but one loaf in the house. Alfred's mother was about to turn out the beggar. But Alfred reminded her of Jesus, saying that the Lord had fed thousands on a few loaves. Alfred's mother was moved. She gave half the loaf to the beggar.

That night, a saint appeared to Alfred in a vision and said:—"Alfred! that beggar to whom your mother gave half the loaf was the Lord Himself. Blessed are you ! Your kingdom will be restored to you!"

Blessed are they who serve the poor. Of such is the Kingdom of Happiness. ◆

The Deadly Eye

In an ancient Celtic story, we read of a God who, out of curiosity, looked in at the window of a house where sorcerers were preparing a magic potion. And out of it, from the cauldron, rose a poisonous smoke which reached the God's eye and made it deadly for those on whom it would look.

Such a deadly eye is the knowledge born of mere curiosity, is the knowledge that works without devotion to humanity, without worship of the ideal.

Samadrishti

One day, Jesus struck the ground and picked up dust, then opened his hands. And, behold! in one of his hands appeared gold, and in the other clay.

Then turning to his disciples, he said:—"Which of the two is sweeter to your hearts?"

And they said:—"Gold!"

But Jesus said:—"Gold and clay are alike to me!"

The Voice of Jesus

In a street, a dog lies dead. And men of "experience" make comments as they pass.

"How it stinks!" says one. "What an ugly sight?" says another. "What a dirty sore on its back!" says a third.

Then is heard a gentle voice:—"What beautiful white teeth it has!" It is the voice of gentle Jesus,—the voice of a child.

The Quest

There is a story of a rich and prosperous man. He has built a beautiful house. He has married a beautiful girl. And he thinks he is happy!

Suddenly, he makes a discovery,—a tragic discovery. He finds that his own dear wife,—she on whom he has lavished all the love of his heart,—has gone astray. She has lived with his brother. And the rich man's heart is broken.

He says to himself:— "I kept her happy in every way, and I lavished all the love of my heart upon her, and she has been faithless to me! I must leave all, and I must wander, from place to place, until I find happiness. Where is happiness?"

He distributes his wealth amongst the poor and goes out, loneliness eating into his heart, and with a deep longing for happiness. "Somewhere," he says to himself, "perchance, I may know the secret of happiness."

He leaves Athens for Rome. In Rome he meets a number of thinkers. He finds that they write learned books, but are unhappy. He is disappointed. He says to himself:— "What shall I do with a thinker who writes books, but has not the spring of joy in his heart?"

From Rome he goes to other lands until he comes to Egypt. Egypt was rich in philosophical thought and tradition. In Egypt they say to him,—the thinkers and the scholars:— "Look at our Pyramids. Look at these huge gigantic structures the skill of Egypt has built ! From the Pyramids, get the message you need."

The man sees the Pyramids, but peace does not enter into his heart. He says to himself:— "The Pyramids are mighty but have no message for me. They are big, even as certain men are big : the bigger the man, the more unhappy he is!"

He finds there is no one in Egypt to give him a clue to happiness.

He moves on to other lands, until he comes to India. And this man says to himself :—"Perchance what I have missed in other lands, I may find in India, the Holy Land of humanity."

He travels from town to town, still in quest of happiness. He goes, from place to place, until he comes to a river bank. There he finds a man, clad in simple clothes,—a *sadhu* in meditation. Something there is in the face of the *sadhu* which deeply impresses the traveller. The *sadhu's* face is radiant with joy. Some influence, some magnetism goes out of him. So is it ever with holy men : they have a spiritual magnetism. The traveller gazes at the face of the *sadhu*, and says to himself:— "This man looks advanced in age, but how beautiful his face ! His hair is grey, but a light emanates from him. He is old, yet radiant, young and radiant in face, radiant with the light and eternal youngness of life." The traveller sits down quietly.

After sometime the *sadhu* opens his eyes and sees a stranger. The *sadhu* smiles and asks:—"Who are you?"

Even as these few words fall from the lips of this holy man, the traveller's heart is ravished. He says to himself:—"Perchance, here is the man who may give me a clue to happiness." There is a power, a magic, in the words of holy men. There is a spiritual magnetism in the words of the servants of God.

The traveller, who has learnt a number of languages, says to the *sadhu*:—"I have been out in quest of happiness. I have been in India for sometime. After visiting a number of other countries, I have come here. I have seen you, I have gazed at your face, in silence, and something within me says:—'You are the Master whom I have searched so long. You will show me the way to happiness!' Now tell me, Master, where and how may I find happiness?"

The *sadhu* says:—"Give me the story of your life."

The traveller gives the storyof his life, mentioning the incident of his wife and how he had loved her and how she had betrayed him, and the traveller sheds tears of sorrow and says:—"Master, my heart is breaking. Tell me where is happiness?"

The sage smiles like a child and says:—"My son the secret of happiness is in one *mantra*, in one *sadhana*, conquer thyself."

I have little more to say to you to night. Here is the message for everyone who would stay in this *Ashrama*:—"Conquer thyself!" Mistaken are they who think that the *Ashrama* is no more than a club. The one *sadhana* for everyone who would be a member of the *Ashrama* is to conquer the senses.

No exercises, no athletics, no sermons, no excursions will help you, if you will not strive to live a life of purity. You, who stay here, I ask you all to breathe out the aspiration:— "God, give us the gift of purity." They blunder badly who think that life is meant for *bhoga* (sense indulgence). Over and over again, have I meditated upon the words of Jesus:— "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." And believe me none but the pure in heart can truly serve India. None but the pure in heart have the power to rebuild her broken Temple of Freedom.

[*From an address at the Shakti Ashrama, Rajpur.*]

●

The Man who Never Came Back

Who was he? He longed to walk with the Lord, in lowly paths, by unknown ways,—free. He went out, leaving all possessions and bore the strain of travel, far and wide. And as he wandered from village to village, he heard, again and again, the cry in his heart:— "O Lord, guide Thou my lowly feet in the Homeward Way!"

Visvarupa read much : he meditated much: and he was filled with a longing for the Lord. He was not more than sixteen, when *vairagya* (spirit of detachment) awoke in his heart. He began to see the futility of things. A near relative of his was Lokanath. To him only Visvarupa opened his heart, from time to time. Lokanath was devoted to Visvarupa as a disciple to his Guru.

Visvarupa's father, Pandit Jagannath, saw his son grow in knowledge and beauty, and desired very much to see that he was betrothed to a girl of a good family. Visvarupa became more and more detached in his talk and dealings. He wore, more and more, a look of abstraction. And, over and over again, the question arose within him:—"Can marriage give me peace of mind?"

One day, all of a sudden, a vision rises before him. In it he sees that mother, father, brother, friend,—all are forms, —fleeting, passing, transient : the one Reality is the Spirit. He sees that dragged by desire men wander, without understanding, in the wheel of birth and death. Men wander in the way of ignorance. Men have lost the True Way, the Way of Wisdom. As from a high watch-tower, men, beasts, birds, trees, all seem to be as grains, specks of dust, so do father, mother, friends, relatives, all dwindle into small specks, and Visvarupa's *moha* for them vanishes.

Visvarupa understands himself! He says to himself:—"Let me look upon all these men with compassion. They think, they desire, they plan each day. They wander, being driven hither and thither by *maya*. They wander in darkness. They say:—'Let us enjoy today : we shall think of God tomorrow.' Alas! they know not that tomorrow may not come, for the body is perishable and may drop down dead any moment. Let me not wait till tomorrow. Let me think of God, today ! Let me think of the soul,—my true welfare,—without delay. When the house is on fire, how foolish to wait!"

Visvarupa's younger brother is Nimai*. Visvarupa says to his mother, one day:—"Mother, here is a little book : I have brought if for dear Nimai. Give it to him when he grows in years : do not forget!"

The mother is simple: she does not understand what Visvarupa really means. She says to him:—

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* Sri Chaitanya

"When Nimai grows in years! Surely you will not then be far. If I forget, you will not, I am sure. You will, with your hand, give this book to dear Nimai, and he will study the book at your feet. You are a scholar!"

Visvarupa says:—"Yes, mother, if I remain, I shall certainly give the book to dear Nimai with my hand: but you should remember!"

The simple mother does not know that Visvarupa is a guest in her house, that in a few days he will leave home in quest of the Lord.

* * *

It is a summer night. Visvarupa is sleepless: he is meditating on the problem of life. "Shall I attain?" he asks himself.

His eyes survey his house. He gazes at his mother. By her is sleeping Nimai. His father is sleeping on a separate cot. Visvarupa gazes, again and again, at his father: his hair is white, his brow has marks of anxiety. And Visvarupa, in a weak moment, says to himself:—"Father is old and poor. Nimai is still a boy. If father passes away, and if I too leave home, who will take care of mother and Nimai?"

For a moment Visvarupa,—a man with the make-up of a mystic and a saint,—feels depressed, embarassed, nerve-tired. Then he reflects. He begins to feel that all forms begin and have their end: all things perish. Alone space and law remain. All the worlds,—the suns, the moons, the stars,—flow back into formlessness. And he says to himself:—"Death overtaketh all, and in the interlude called 'life,' all beings are sustained by the one World-Power. Who am I to say that I can take care of mother and Nimai ? The one World-Power alone holds, protects, nourishes creatures until they go back to the eternal drift! I go !"

He bows down to his mother, now fast asleep. With one last longing look, the gazes at Nimai: then he swiftly goes out.

He reaches the bank of the Ganges. The night is dark : it is difficult to get a boat. Visvarupa is fearless. "Mother, I come to thee!" he cries. Then he plunges into the river : he swims to the other shore. He meets a *sanyasin* and is initiated by him into *sanyasa*. Visvarupa is henceforth called Shankararanya.

For two years he goes, from place to place, a pilgrim to anceint shrines, until he reaches the famous shrine of Pandharpur, in the Maharashtra. In this shrine he stays and meditates on the mystery of life. In this shrine he lives in a corner the life of a contemplative until he leaves this world.

* * *

The dawn awakes. Pandit Jagannath cries a lonely cry:—"Where is Visvarupa?" A search for him is made, but Visvarupa cannot be found.

The news now is bruited abroad that Visvarupa has left his home and gone out. Where? Who knows? Pandit Jagannath is shedding tears. Several groups talk of Visvarupa. Some say:—"Dark is the night of *kaliyuga*, and seekers like

Visvarupa leave the world in search of the eternal Home!"

The mother Sachidevi, cries out, again and again:—"O Earth, why hast thou concealed my beloved child?"

Visvarupa is gone! And never will he come back to his earthly home. Visvarupa is gone into solitude to grow into the realization that all things change, only the One abides,— that men know not who run their race of life through hot desires, that only the Wise, flooded with devotion, reach the Heart and in the Heart commune with the Beauty that never dies.

One of these Wise Men was Visvarupa!

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A Hero and a Prophet

Mahavira was born about 599 B. C. in a town in Bihar near Patna. His father was a Chief, a *kshatrya* named Siddhartha. His mother, Queen Trishala or Priya-karini, was a daughter of Chetaka, the head of the Republic of the Vajjis.

Mahavira, as a boy, is sent to school. They find he does not need school-masters. He has in his heart a wisdom which no schools may give. Like the Buddha, he is smitten with a longing to renounce the world. He lives up to the age of twenty-eight with his family. Then his father and mother pass away. He feels he must now enter the stream of *sanyasa* (renunciation). He goes to his elder brother for permission to renounce. "The wounds are yet fresh," says his brother to him; "wait !"

He waits for two years more. He is now thirty. Like Jesus, he feels he must renounce all and enter upon a ministry of service. Like the Buddha, he distributes his wealth among the poor. On the day he leaves his family, he gives over his kingdom to his brother, then he passes into a life of penance and prayer.

To the Buddha came illumination after six years of *sadhana* (spiritual discipline). To Mahavira comes illumination after twelve years of meditation and *tapas* (self-discipline). He attains wisdom-consciousness on the bank of the Rijikulo in the village Jrimbhaika. He becomes, in the language of the books, "Tirthankara,"—a word which I interpret to mean the "Perfect Man."

Then, like the Buddha, he goes upon his great mission of teaching. For thirty years, he moves from place to place. He preaches in Bengal and Bihar his great gospel of happiness. He takes his message even to savage tribes, unmindful of their cruel treatment to him. He goes on his mission to Sravasti and the Himalayas. How beautifully calm and patient he remains in the midst of many troubles and persecutions ! He passes away on the Diwali Day in 526 B.C. at the age of seventy two in Pavapuri (Bihar).

How beautiful the life of Mahavira ! He goes from place to place to preach his doctrine and many mock at him : he is silent ! At meetings they disturb him, insult him : he is silent ! A band of men beat him in the forest as he sits in meditation: he is silent. A disciple of his deserts him and goes about spreading evil reports against him : he is silent ! He becomes a Mahavira, a great victor, a superman, because he develops *santi-shakti*, the power of peace. ●

Where Dwelleth God?

Of a Sufi teacher the question was asked :—"Where dwelleth God ?"

And the Sufi teacher said:— "I went to temples but found Him not ! And I went to mosques but found Him not ! I travelled to different towns and villages in Arabia but found Him not ! I visited Egypt and other countries : I found not the Lord ! But I found Him,—my Beloved,—after much weary wandering."

And a disciple asked :—"Master ! where did you find the Lord, at last ?"

And the teacher said:— "One day, I entered a house. It was evening : dim lights were burning. On a cot lay a woman: by her side was her husband. This woman was in great suffering, for one of her bones had been broken. Beside the husband of the woman, there was, also, a daughter. During the day, when the husband moved out to attend to business, the daughter looked after the mother, who lay in pain, stretched on the cot. And in the evening the husband came and he kept awake, nursing her, looking after her needs. He served her through the night and, as he kept awake, he prayed the following prayer :— "O Lord of Life ! She hath served me for twenty years and more. Heal her and bless her !"

And the Sufi teacher said :—"I knelt down immediately and kissed the feet of the husband of this woman. And I said to him :— 'Blessed are you and blessed is your daughter, for here in your home have I found my God!'"

True it is, that he who does his work in the right spirit, he,—not the temple-keeper,—bears witness to God!

⁂

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The Prophet

The Prophet of Islam was singular in his devotico to God, singular in the spirit of faith and of servine to the poor,—singular, too, in his humility and the spirit of prayer. He never claimed to be a supernatural being. He said to his people :— "I am but a man like you !" One thing only he claimed, —that to him a message had come from Allah.

When I think of his fasts and meditations in the cave Hira, I say to myself :— "Here is an Aryan yogi !" When I read of his visions and voices, I say :— "Here is a medium whom the World-Spirit has chosen for a mighty work !"

When he starts on his mission, they tempt him with money, they threaten him with death. He stands unbribed, unawed.

An Arab deputation says to him :— "We shall give you wealth and power, but you must stop preaching."

"Have you had your say?" asks the Prophet.

"Yes," is the answer.

"Then hear my reply," says Mahomed. And he recites verses of the *Qura'n !*

In his simplicity, humility and tenderness, he reminds one of an Aryan sage. He milks his cow, he sweeps his room, he sews his garments.

He loves his horse and camel and with his own hands he dries their sweat. A cat sleeps on his garment : he would not disturb the cat's sleep !

He wants no honours. "I am no more than a man." he says. "Call me a servant of Allah !" A king and leader, he mends his clothes, he visits the sick : he loves little children in streets : he lives on dates and water : he dines with slaves : he mingles with the poor. He has no aristocratic aloofness. He has no airs of a superior person. "I sit at meals as a servant," he says, "for I am really a servant."

And what spiritual beauty shines in his words and silent acts as he is passing away ! He looks up to heaven and says :—"O Lord ! I have fulfilled my mission. Bear Thou witness to it !" He lifts up his hands : he blesses his people !

●

Ye of Little Faith !

Some people asked Jesus :—"By what do you walk upon the waters ?"

Jesus answered :—"By faith and certainty."

And they said :— "But we, too, believe as you believe. We have faith, and we are certain. We do not doubt."

And Jesus said :— "Then, walk upon the waters."

And they walked upon the waters with him, when suddenly a wave came. It raised him up : they began to sink.

Jesus said to them :— "What is the matter with you ?"

They said :— "What could we do, Master ? When the wave came we feared it, and so began to sink."

And Jesus said :— "When you feared, you ceased to believe. Alas ! you feared the waves. You did not fear the Lord of the waves." ●

The Plain of Almsgiving

The noble example of Ashoka inspired King Harsha and he put a stop to animal slaughter in India : he forbade the eating of flesh-diet. He established travellers' rests and built shrines on the banks of the Ganges. He realised that the One Light of Truth shone in different faiths, and he gave generously to Brahmin as to Buddhist scholars.

Every five years, the King opened what he called the "Plain of Almsgiving." To this Plain were attracted five lakhs of people to receive alms from the King and to bless him with the blessings which the poor ones give in abundance. The King, entering his spacious tent, bowed in reverence to the Name of the Buddha, reciting the *mantra* :— "*Buddham saranam gachchami*" ("I take refuge in the Buddha !") and gave liberally to the poor, seeing in them all his Master. Harsha gave gifts not alone to Buddhist *bhikkhus* but, also, to Brahmins and heretics,—for twenty days at a stretch. He gave generously, also, to the poor and the orphans, to widows and old men, to the blind and the cripple. Every day the King gave until, as in the words of an eye-witness, "all the wealth that had been accumulating in the royal treasury was found to be completely exhausted."

This "Almsgiving," the Buddhists rightly called the "Feast of Salvation." At this impressive ceremony, the King gave away everything he had,—his necklaces, his ear-rings, his bracelets, the garland of his diadem, the pearls which adorned his neck, the diamond that gleamed above his head. Aye, the very royal robes he wore he gave away in charity. And parting with his clothes, he looked to his sister to give him a common, worn-out garment, and he put it on repeating the words:— "*Buddham saranam gachchami*." And he bowed in reverence to "all the Buddhas of all the countries !" Then said he in deep humility:— "So by giving away all my treasures I deposit them in Land of Happiness ! And may I, in future births, too, learn not to hoard but to give away,—to all who are poor : in them resides the radiant Buddha !"

●

The Value of Silence

Jesus taught as all the Great Ones of Humanity have taught, the value of silence.

They asked Jesus :— "What shall we do to enter into the Kingdom ?"

And Jesus answered :— "Never say anything ! Go into silence !"

"We, often," they said to him, "are unable to do that."

And Jesus said:— " Then never say anything but what is good !"

"What Use are Thy Millions?"

Duni Chand was a wealthy merchant of Lahore. Guru Nanak gave Duni Chand a needle and said:—"Duni Chand, keep it with thee, and give it back to me in the next world!"

And Duni Chand said:— "Master! this needle I cannot carry after death: how can I return it?"

"What use, then, Duni Chand, are thy millions to thee?"

And Duni Chand was changed. He spent much of what he had in the service of the poor, and became a devoted disciple of the Guru.

●

In the Hour of Death

One day, a man said to Hatim :— "This man has untold treasure !"

Hatim said :— "Yes,—he has earned untold treasure. Has he, also, earned endless life ? If not, of what use will his wealth be to him in the hour of death ?"

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Smile on!

She is only eight years old. She falls ill, her fever develops into consumption : but she smiles on!

She smiles,—and she serves. She goes to a neighbouring hospital and she passes on flowers to children and she speaks a few words of comfort to some of the men and women lying ill in the hospital. Herself ill, she smiles on! Her joy is in little things.

So smiling, so serving, she walks the little way. She vanishes as vanisheth a drop of water in the wide sea. She is hidden in the Hidden One. She,—her ego,—vanishes : only the One remains!

Big things the Lord asketh not of you. Bring to Him little things. "A leaf, a flower, a fruit, a little water,"—offered in love are by Him accepted in joy. Bring to Him little flowers. Offer Him little acts of service and love!

Bhai Buddha

In the early hour of the dawn, Guru Nanak found that one child always came and stood behind the Guru, while he sat in devotion. And one day, the Guru, said to the child:—"What is it that brings you here so early in the dawn, when others are in their beds asleep? You are so young : why do you disturb your sleep?"

And the child said:—"Sire! my mother once asked me to give fuel to the fire. And I saw that the smaller and feebler splinters burnt away earlier than the thicker and older ones. Then I said to myself:—'It is true, I am a child. But who knows death may come to me earlier than to those who are my elders? Let me not spend my time in sleep! Let me awake even when I am a child!' This thought, sire! brings me to your feet so early in the dawn, every day!"

This child spoke words of wisdom. And Guru Nanak was delighted and said to him:—"Child! henceforth wilt thou be called Buddha,—Bhai Buddha (wise brother)."

And Bhai Buddha had a unique place in the Sikh community.

●

The House which Jesus Built

Jesus taught that love must be given to all. "Love your enemies," he said, "bless them that curse you."

Love all, not merely your relatives and friends. Yes, love the sinner, too.

We read of how Jesus built, with his own hands, a little stone-house for Mary Magdeline to live in. He built the house for her and asked her to live there and in silence, meditate and pray to God.

●

"Give! Give!"

Not a little of his time, Jesus spent in holy silence. But whenever he opened his lips to speak, his one word was :—"Give! Give!"

He asked his disciples, again and again, to give to the poor and needy. And one rule he gave to his disciples was:—"Never send away a needy man or woman empty from your house."

Speaking to his disciples, one day, he said:—"If ever you send away a beggar empty from your house, remember, the angels will not visit your house for seven days."

The Promise of a Saint

One day, when a poor man asked an alms of Francis, the saint, in a temporary lapse, forgot his usual custom and passed by the poor man unheeded. But speedily, Francis recollected himself, ran after the poor man, and liberally relieved his wants.

That very day, Francis made a solemn promise to God that he would never again refuse an alms to any poor man who would ask it of him for the love of God.

And this promise, we may be sure, Francis faithfully kept till the day of his death. ●

The Life Beautiful

Not many years ago, there came to America a young man. He came from Japan. He was studying at one of the Universities of America.

One day, this young Japanese meets his teacher, —a professor in his College,—and says to him:— "Sir! may I speak?"

The professor says:—"Speak out what you have to say."

And the young man says:—"Tell me how I may make my life beautiful. I do not expect you to speak to me of a creed or a dogma. I do not expect you to speak to me of a book or even of the Bible. But speak to me, Master ! of the Life Beautiful. How may I make my life beautiful?"

It is a question which springs also in our hearts.

After several weeks, the young man comes again to the professor and says :— "Sir ! today I come to take leave of you, for I go back home. I return to Japan. I have finished my work here."

The professor is surprised. He says to the student:—"Last time you came you said something concerning the Life Beautiful. Have you found the secret of the Life Beautiful?"

The professor then looks into the eyes of the student. They gleam with joy. And the young man's face glows with a strange light. "Sir!" says the student, "I have found the secret of the Life Beautiful. And so I go back home, treasuring this secret in my heart,—the secret of the Life Beautiful."

And the professor, deeply surprised, says to the student:—"Where, where, my brother! where have you found the Life Beautiful?"

Then the young man, with a quiver of emotion in his words, says:—"Sir! I left you weeks ago, and still the quest was in my heart, still the search was in my eyes, and still I went, from place to place, asking myself the question:—Where is the Life Beautiful? Here, in these big cities, in these crowded quarters in houses of learning and civilisation, I find not what I have sought, again and again. And there were tears in my eyes, until I met an old man, a sage. Then I *saw*!"

"What did you see?" asks the professor.

"Sir!" answers the student, "I saw the face of the old man was kindled. The eyes of the old man were bright, filled with light. And I spoke to the old man, saying:—'You look so young! You are so happy!' And I asked him:—'What is the secret of your youth? What is the secret of your happiness?' And the old man answered thus:—'From morn till night I seek to serve. I am busy, busy, busy, working for others, trying to help others, trying to serve the poor, sending out my sympathy and love to those who stand in need of help and strength, serving them in this broken world. And, suddenly, this discovery shone within my heart that others are not apart from me but are a part of me. They are mine, as I am theirs. No separation between me and the poor and suffering ones, between me and the lowely ones! We are one, brothers! in the movement of One Life, children of the One Eternal who shines and shines and ever shines in all forms on earth and sea. Then, O my brother! then I found that the secret of the Life Beautiful was sympathy that went out to all. The secret is the love that never dies. Love and sympathy I give henceforth to all. I have found the Life Beautiful.' "

NO SPARATION between me and the Poor and Suffering ons. between me and the lowely ons.

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The Teacher

From mountain-tops he came,—the Teacher. He came to a city to teach the truths of life. And he stood in the market place. He saw a crowd in a state of great excitement

One,—a Muslim,—said:—"My religion is the best."

Another, a Christian, said:—"Alone the Christian gospel is true."

And a Hindu said:—"The Sanatan Dharma is the noblest religion."

And from heated words they came to heavy blows : and a big quarrel ensued,—in the name of religion.

Then went up the Teacher to them, and said:—"Why quarrel ye? Religion came to bind and beautify and build,—not to create hate and strife. Come with me!"

And he took them to a beautiful garden full of roses. And he asked them to sit down. And when the excitement had subsided, he asked them all to gaze at the beauty of a rose.

Then, standing in their midst, he said:—"Look! how the petals of the rose cluster round their golden centre! So are all religions and all prophets and saints, so many petals clustering round the one rose,—God, the Beautiful. He, the Golden Purusha, is the golden centre of all!"

And their eyes touched with tears, they embraced one another in love.

All Life is Sacred

In love and utter simplicity, Francis mingles with the poor. He understands what a blessing it is to belong to the brotherhood of the poor. "It were a quicker journey to God from a hut," he says, "than from a palacc."

Poorer and purer than the "poor" are birds and beasts. How much Francis loves them! A youth has caught a number of turtle-doves and is taking them to market. He meet Francis on the way. "I pray thee, give me these gentle birds," said the saint. The good youth gives them all. And Francis receives them into his bosom, talks to them tenderly, builds nests for them all!

A fisherman brings to Francis a water-fowl. Francis accepts the bird, then opens his hands to let it fly away. Another fisherman brings to him a great fish alive. Francis puts it back into the water of the lake.

He is tender even to earth-worms, picking them up when walking, lest they be crushed under foot. He speaks to the swallows. He preaches to birds. He tames the wild wolf, calling it "brother." He gives honey to the bees in winter so that they should not perish from cold. ●

The Man Whose Five Friends Died!

One evening, a man comes to meet Parasi. And Parasi asks:—"Whence are you?"

The man says:—"Sir, I come from a far-off place. Your name has travelled far and wide. I heard of you and your holy teaching : and I am come to have your blessings."

Parasi says to him:—"Brother, speak what you will. Speak without reserve!"

The man says:—"Sir, I come from a great distance. I arrived here this morn. I am a stranger here. I need food. I have no friend, no relative here,—if you will kindly let me stay in your School and give me daily food!"

Parasi says:—"Brother, I gladly give you leave to stay here."

A few days pass. Parasi calls the man to his room and says:—"Brother, you come every day. But why do you wear blackclothes?"

The man says :— "Master, if a relative or friend dies, we wear black. It is the custom of our country."

Parasi asks:—"Which of your friends or relatives have you lost?"

The man says:—"Master, five friends! Long did they stay with me : all the five died!"

Parasi says:—"Five friends! So many! And they all died the same day. May I know their names?"

The man says:—"Master, I dare not say no to you. You ask, and I must tell you. The names of my five friends were:—Passion, Anger, Greed, Attachment and Egoism. All the five died the same day. All the five were my friends and had stayed with me long. Therefore, I wear black!"

Parasi calls a servant and says to him:—"Turn this man out of the door!"

The man is confounded and says:—"Master, have mercy! Do not turn me out of the door! I have not had my noon-meals yet!"

But Parasi is adamant. He tells the servant:—"Turn him out of the door!"

The man says:—"I go out of the Hall, but I will cling to the outskirts of this holy house. And I shall hope that, some day, the Master will look upon me with mercy. I know not, but I must have done some wrong!"

And the man sits outside : but his eyes are bright with a strange, mystic light !

At twelve o'clock, noon, Parasi tells the servant:—"Call the man in!"

The man is brought before Parasi who says:—"It is noon : it is the hour when resident members of the School sit to meals. You are hungry. Have your meals!"

The man feels happy. But as soon as he has finished his meals, Parasi calls his servant again and says:—"Turn this man out!"

So is this man turned out seventeen times! And every time Parasi looks into his face. And every time Parasi finds that the man's eyes sparkle with a strange, mystic light. Every time the man is seen smiling : his face is calm, quiet.

And Parasi calls the man again and says:—"Blessed are you among the mortals! I was testing you. I never meant to insult you. But it looked like my insulting you. And I did so seventeen times. And every time you smiled and a spiritual light illumined your eyes. Blessed are you ! Your five friends are really dead. You have conquered desires : you have won. Stay with me,—and bless me every day. Your eyes behold the Secret of Life : your heart has a vision of the Secret of Wisdom. Feel no longer lonely : look to me for fellowship and affection. Stay with me, brother ! and purify the School with your presence. You will heal many hearts ! And in wisdom and love you will help many of those who stumble, alas ! through the dark forest of this Life!" ●

The Pilgrim and Krishna's Vision

Nimai's* father, Pandit Jagannath Misra, has finished his bath in the Ganges and is returning home. On the way, he sees a Brahmin. He is a pilgrim. His face is radiant, and he wears a *tulsi-mala* (garland of *tulsi* beads). On his lips is the Name of the Lord.

Nimai's father bows down to the Brahmin and, on learning that the Brahmin is a stranger to the place, requests him, saying:—"Come with me and be my guest these few days." The Brahmin consents.

On reaching his house, Jagannath washes the Brahmin's feet and sprinkles the water on his own head and his wife and children. He offers food to the Brahmin. The Brahmin says:—"I cook my own food!"

Jagannath brings rice, dal, vegetables and potatoes. The Brahmin prepares his own food. Then, on broad palm leaves, he spreads out his food, and closing his eyes, offers a prayer dedicating his food to the Lord.

The Brahmin has not finished his prayer, when he hears gentle footfalls. He opens his eyes and sees that a child is there eating of the rice, *dal* and potatoes offered to the Lord ! The Brahmin cries aloud:—"Alas, my food-offering is spoiled!"

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*Nimai was the name by which Sri Chaitanya was called when he was a child.

The child runs away. Jagannath and his wife arrive at the spot. To them the Brahmin says:—"Don't be angry with the child! Don't beat him ! What does the child know ? My food-offering is spoilt, but don't worry ! Bring me a few grains of gram. I shall eat them and drink water. I need no more!"

Jagannath and his wife are sad : they press the Brahmin to cook again and have his food. Jagannath's wife brings rice and other things. The Brahmin has another bath and now sits to cooking again. It is 4 p. m. The mother holds Nimai near her. The Brahmin's food is ready. The mother is called in. She goes into a room and returns in a few minutes. Nimai has vanished. As the Brahmin has closed his eyes and is offering the food to the Lord, gentle footfalls are heard again. The Brahmin sees Nimai eating rice, *dal*, vegetable and potatoes. Nimai feels happy. The Brahmin says:—"It was fated so : my food-offering is spoiled again!"

Jagannath and his wife are now on the spot to see what Nimai has done. They seize Nimai. And the Brahmin says:—"I will not let you beat the child ! What does a child know ? The fates will not let me eat food, today. Don't worry ! Give me sweets or a few grains of gram and water. I shall cook again tomorrow."

Jagannath and his wife implore the Brahmin, saying:—"Our hearts are sad. They will not be glad until you have your meals. Do cook again,—for our satisfaction!"

Rice and *dal* and vegetables and potatoes are brought in again, and Nimai is bound with a rope. The Brahmin bathes again and sits to cooking, a third time. The food is ready. The Brahmin closes his eyes to offer prayer and dedicate the food to the Lord, when, lo and behold ! the Lord, Sri Krishna, stands before the Brahmin, playing upon His flute. And the Lord smiles and says:—"You called me. I came twice to you in the form of a child, but you knew Me not ! Yet I know your devotion is beautiful. Ask of Me what you will!"

The Brahmin is dumb-founded. With folded hands, he speaks to the Lord:—"O *Purushottama*, wonderful is Thy *Maya* ! How can I, an humble Brahmin, know Thee, Lord ? Neither *tapas* nor *dhyana*, neither *japa* nor *dana* have I done, O Lord ! Thy mercy fills me and I but gaze on Thee in speechless wonder. I have done nothing, O Lord ! And Thou dost grant me Thy vision ! And Thou dost ask me to ask of Thee a boon. What shall I ask ? So bless me, Lord ! that Thy Beauteous Face may fill the Temple of my Heart, for ever!"

"So be it," saith the Lord. And the vision vanishes !

Then the Brahmin eats his food in great joy and in his heart bows down to the face of Nimai and goes to bed.

Early in the dawn, he awakes. Jagannath and his wife, also, awake in the dawn. And the

Brahmin says to Jagannath:—"Yours is no ordinary child! Your child is a *rupa* (form) of the Lord. So the Lord told me when, in His mercy, He granted me His vision, last night!"

A few days stayed the Brahmin in Jagannath's house. But every day he bowed down to Nimai and had the child's benedictions. And in the Brahmin's heart the child's face was radiant forever.

◆

A few days stayed the Brahmin Jagannat

The Song of Shantideva

Shantideva was the son of a king of Gujerat called in those days Saurashtra ("The Good Kingdom"). India's most prominent king, then, was Sila, the son of Harsha,—the great emperor of India who once every five years gave away his all, jewels and diamonds, silver and gold, robes and vessels, to the poor and needy. Sila was a worthy son of a worthy father. Sila's son was Shantideva. He inherited the kingdom and spiritual aspirations of his father and his grandfather.

Shantideva is a psychic, too. On the day he is about to receive the royal consecration, he sees, as in a dream, the Bodhisatva Manjusri. And the Bodhisatva's voice speaks to him, saying:—"Shantideva, renounce the glory of kingship and be a servant of the poor and lowly."

Shantideva obeys the voice of the Unseen. Shantideva refuses to be crowned king. Shantideva renounces the palace and puts on the humble garb of a *bhikkhu* (mendicant).

Shantideva opens out his heart in a hymn of wondrous beauty. Shantideva sings:—

May I be for all beings
A healer of pain!

May I be to all who ail
A doctor and a nurse:

May I give food and drink to all
Who suffer from pangs of hunger and thirst!

May I be to the poor
A treasure untold!

May I be a defender of those
That forsaken lie on the Aroadside!

May I be to those who long for the Other Shore
A Boat and a Bridge!

May I be a Lamp that holds the light
To those who lose the way!

To this vision has India borne witness through the ages. This vision is India: this vision will build and bind India and will rebuild Europc as she lies bleeding in the wreckage of her riches and the ruins of her civilisation!

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"Let Your Food be Pure!"

Banarasi Das was a true *sadhu*. He was a jain: he lived a clean, pure life. Benarasi Das had battled with his body,— had striven and conquered.

One day, Akbar invited Banarasi Das to the imperial palace at Delhi. The Sadhu came. Akbar stood, face to face, with a Conqueror greater than himself.

And when the Emperor asked the Saint to give an *upadesh*, Banarasi Das spoke a few words. It is, perhaps, the shortest *upadesh* (discourse) recorded in history. Banarasi Das said to Akbar:—"Let your food be pure and clean!"

Not I, But Thou!

A lover stands at the closed door of the Beloved and asks for admission. A voice comes from within:—"Who is there?"

And the lover answers:—"It is I."

And the voice from within says:—"Turn back : the door is barred."

The lover returns a second time,—wiser.

Again the voice of the Beloved asks:—"Who is there?"

This time the lover answers:—"It is thou!"

And the door is opened unto him.

When *gnana* comes, the ego-consciousness vanishes, the little "I" drops out : the one vision of the "Thou," the vision of the Beloved in all, absorbs the soul. Knowledge is blended with *bhakti*. And in a vision of the unity of the lover and the Beloved is found the wisdom of life.

Saccha Sauda

Even as a boy, Nanak delights in the Name of the Lord. His mother presses him, one day, to go and join other boys in their games. Nanak calls the boys together, asks them to sit in a circle and sing:—"*Sat Kartar. Sat Kartar.*" "The Eternal Maker!" Nanak is sent to a school to learn Hindi, Sanskrit and Persian. Nanak asks the teacher to sing first the Name of the Lord.

Nanak's father is anxious that his boy be absorbed in business: Nanak is absorbed in God! Kalu sends Nanak out, giving him twenty rupees to open a shop and earn his livelihood. Nanak is young but knows that life is more than livelihood and spends the entire amount to buy provisions in order to feed the *sadhus*, whom he meets on the way. And returning home, he tells his father:—"I did *saccha sauda* (true business)".

The secret, indeed, of *saccha sauda* is not to get but to give. ●

"I Scattered All!"

One day, Hasan asked Rabia:—"Tell me how you attained to this spiritual height."

Rabia answered:—"I know not where I stand. I only know that I did but one thing, friend! I scattered all I received."

Yes,—Rabia realised that life was given not to hoard but to scatter in the service of her Beloved.

●

At the Gates of Paradise

A man had a dream in which he saw that he stood at the Gates of Paradise. And he saw a learned Rabbi who said:—"I long to enter Heaven. I studied the Holy Books, day and night!"

"Wait!" said the Angel. "We shall know from your earthly record if you studied the Books in reverence for the Prophets or for the sake of social appaluse."

Then appeared another learned man. He said:—"I long to enter Paradise. I fasted much."

"Wait!" said the Angel. "We shall first enquire if your motives were pure."

Then appeared another man. Simple was he. He said:—"I long to enter Paradise. A few fragments of my bread I shared each day with a man who limped and could not earn his daily bread: and I swept his floor, and I filled his water-jar every day. And I prayed:—'O Lord! make me a servant of some who suffer and are in pain every day!",

And the Angel said:—"Blessed among mortals art thou! Thou hast attained the Abode of the Immortals. The Gates of Heaven are opened unto thee!"

"Thy will be Done!"

A friend said to Rabia:—"You are ill: much have you suffered. Why don't you pray to God for relief from illness?"

Rabia answered:—"O friend! know you not who it is who wills this suffering for me? Is it not God who wills it?"

There was but one prayer in Rabia's heart, day and night:—"O God! My God! Thy will be done!"

The Spiritual Leader

At a meeting of aspirants, they discussed the question, "Who is a true spiritual leader?"

A disciple said:—"A warrior of the Lord."

"No," said Hatim Hashim, when they asked him his opinion; "a warrior is a *ghazi*, one who fights and kills others on the battlefield. But a spiritual leader is one who fights himself and becomes a martyr."

Another disciple said:—"A spiritual leader is a philanthropist."

"No," said Hatim; "such a man is a liberal giver. But a spiritual leader must be a receiver of God's grace."

"And who receives the grace of God?" they asked him.

And he answered:—"He who looks up to God in the daily trials of life, and whose one only hope is God and none but God!"

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If Ye would Enter Paradise

A man stood at the gate of Paradise. The gate would not open.

And he cried out:—"What shall I bring to Thee, O Lord?"

And the Voice said:—"Bring me, my child! sorrow of the sad and weary, and humility of the heart!"

●

The Deepest Need

A friend asked Rabia:— "What is the deepest need of the life of him who is in quest of God?"

And she answered:— "He who would walk the Way needs neither eyes to see, nor tongue to tell. What he needs is a pure heart. So strive for purity. Then will your consciousness awake, and you will no longer fall into the slumber of the senses. When the mind is truly awakened, it serves as a true friend. Then, indeed, you need no other friend."

Raja Janak and the Fakir

A *fakir* pays a visit to Raja Janak, the king. The *fakir* is shocked at the grandeur and luxury in which Raja Janak dwells. "How can I," says the *fakir* to himself, "learn of this king who is steeped in luxury?"

Then, suddenly, the *fakir* sees that the palace is on fire. The king sits calm and quiet : but the *fakir* runs out of the room to see if his *dhoti*, which he had washed and kept in the sun, is safe against fire!

The king, who looked after a big kingdom, was "free from action," for his action was detached, was desireless. The *fakir* was poor, but he was not free from action, for he had not conquered craving.

"Our test is in what we value, not in what we have,"—says an English writer. Free from the taint of action is he who is detached.

Youngest Martyrs

The four sons of Guru Gobind Singh were arrested but were promised release on condition that they would leave their father. What did they say? "We shall stand by our father and resist *adharma !*"

It was a painful death they were subjected to. Two of them were bricked up alive! To the last they stood, with divine defiance in their eyes, and said:— "Do thy business, tyrant! We are happy!" And their last aspiration was breathed out in the beautiful prayer:— "Thy will be done, O God!"

They practised the lesson taught them by the Guru:-- "Meditate on Him in your heart!" And so they found the strength to suffer for faith and glorify God in the midst of isolation and agony. They were boys of tender age. ●

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The Secret of Sacrifice

A little girl brought flowers to her teacher and said:— "I bring these flowers with *shraddha* for you : accept them!"

And the teacher asked : —"You give me flowers: what do you give the Lord?"

And she said:— "I give myself to Him!"

There is the secret of sacrifice.

Human Targets

Sikh history is a wonderful record of sufferings endured for faith and freedom.

Once, according to a Sikh story, a new musket was brought as a present to Guru Gobind Singh. He said,—in good humour, one may be sure,—that he wanted to try the musket on some one's forehead. He paused to know if anyone of his followers would offer himself for the trial.

Quick came up a number of Sikhs, each one regarding it a privilege to meet death at the Guru's hand! His disciples were trained in a school of hardship : they believed that life must not be hoarded but poured out as a sacrifice. ●

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Sita : A Picture of Tapasya

Soon after Sita married Rama, Dasaratha asked his son to go into exile for fourteen years. Rama said he must not take Sita with him to the forest, for the forest was a world of fear, full of bears and tigers and wolves and lions and wild elephants, demons and serpents: and Sita would get no food in the forest, except sour fruits and roots, and she must in the forest sleep on stony ground. Then to Rama, Sita said with tears in her eyes that to be with him was to be in a palace, that a long journey with him would be a joy to her, that sour fruits would be sweet as the food of the Gods, and that if he left her, her heart would break.

How much she suffered in the forest and, later, in Lanka, when forcibly removed by Ravana! And after Rama's victory over Ravana, she was called upon to go through fire. Sita's was a path not of roses but of flames. Sita was the very picture of *tapasya*. Therefore history remembers her and salutes her as an immortal.

Money and power pass away : what lives and is cherished as sacred in the memory of men is sacrifice. It is the Eternal in time. Sita stands for all time a symbol of sacrifice. ●

Weep Not for Your Sins !

Jesus passed by some people who were weeping and said to them:—"What makes you weep?"

They replied:—"We are weeping for our sins."

Jesus said:—"Leave them alone. They are forgiven you!"

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If a Man Wears a Woman's Clothes

There came to Abu Hasan, one day, a man who asid:—"Thou art a *dervish* of God. Give me the clothes thou hast worn and I shall wear them!"

And Abu Hasan said :—"May I request you first, to answer one question? If a man wear a woman's clothes, does he become a woman?"

"No," said the man.

And the *dervish* asked again:—"If a woman wears a man's clothes, does she become a man?"

"No," was the answer.

"Then," said Abu Hasan, "how can you, by wearing a *fakir's* clothes, become a *fakir*?"

And Abu Hasan proceeded to tell the man that he could not become a *fakir* until he had first a longing for God. In yearning was the seed of realisation.

The Coming of Krishna

On the threshold of her house in the street she stands,—a girl of tender years. They pass through the street,—boys and girls, men and women. She stands!

Some laugh at her. Some taunt her. Some throw little stones at her. She stands!

Hours pass by. She stands! Her father calls her saying, 'tis time for meals. She stands!

Then says her mother:—"Come! 'tis time to eat."

"Mother," she says, "I wait, for in my heart is longing."

"What ails thee, my child?" the mother asks.

And with tears in her eyes, the maiden says:—"Mother! I learn that He will pass by the street, today,—Krishna, the Compassionate. At what hour I know not. But some time, today! And I stand waiting for His coming: for in my heart is a longing to follow the flute."

With eyes of shining expectation, with a heart smitten with longing, she awaits, speechless, the coming of Sri Krishna.

How many have such longing for communion with Krishna?

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The Flame of Passion

Sri Ramakrishna did *tapas* for years, until his flesh was overcome, and every woman was to him an image of his Mother.

Rishi Dayanand practised austerities for years together before he went upon his mission as a teacher of modern India.

A saint assailed by temptation threw himself over a big block of snow, not minding if he would catch pneumonia. He rolled himself in the snow, until his body became cool, bereft of passion.

St. Benedict rolled himself in clumps of thorns and briars. His body became one big wound : but he quenched the flame of passion. ●

"I Have Never Been Ambitious!"

Many years ago, I read of Flammarion, the well-known astronomer of France. He was over eighty years when he passed away. Once they asked him what was the secret of his life and of his power of work.

He said:—"I have worked steadily ten hours a day."

And they said:—"Tremendous is your power of work. What is your secret?"

He gently said :—"I have never been ambitious."

He paused, then said:—"How can I look at the heavens and be ambitious?"

Flammarion lived in the presence of the Infinite. Flammarion was not ambitious. He only longed to serve suffering humanity. ●

Radha's Tears

One day, Krishna goes to Mathura in answer to the call of the people. Radha is depressed. She asks herself, again and again:—"Why has he left me?"

To a friend she says:—"How can I describe my grief to you, O friend! Krishna has left me, and my heart knows no peace. O, that I had the wings to fly to Mathura to meet Krishna again!"

By day and by night, she repeats the one word, "Krishna." "Where is he?" she asks, again and again. She cries:—"O, that I could tear open my heart and in the very core of it place thee,—thy picture,—and gaze on its beauty and feel its holy presence."

On another occasion, she says:—

O Krishna! Krishna!
O Life of my life!
Treasure of my Heart!
Time rolls on:
Thou art still away!
The days have turned into years:
Thou art still away!
Who says Beloved Krishna will return?

Lonely sits Radha in a quiet nook, her eyes filled with tears. Again and again, she looks up and gazes on the blue clouds and cries:—"Wilt thou not return?" She does not eat: she wears the robes of a nun. She gazes on the dark blue neck of a peacock and cries:—"Wilt thou not return?"

On one occasion, she says:— "Alas! feeble is my feminine heart. I miss thee while I seek thee. I fain would treasure thee in my heart: but thou hast left me!"

On another occasion, she cries:—

Love! O Love!
Be thou my Religion!
Be thou the Service of my heart to all!
I dedicate myself to Love!

She weeps. She cries, again and again:— "Why hast thou left me, Lord? Why?"

One night, as she sits alone and in silence, she cries as a child who has lost her mother in a fair. Radha cries out of the depths of her heart:—

Where art thou,
Whom I have lost?
Where art thou, O Lord?
When shall I see thee, again, in my sleep?
When shall I see thee, again,
Blessing me in my dreams?
When shall I feel thee in the shades
Of kadamba trees on the way
To the Jamuna bank?

Awake or abed, I am in quest
Of thee: walking over meadow or wood,
Passing over mountain and stream,
I seek thee. Krishna! Come!

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Once thy lotus-face did flash
Upon my heart. And now without thee, O Lord!
I feel forlorn!
Within me is the darkness of the night:
Yon stars do mock me and I cry:—
"Where art thou, Krishna?"
In my heart, alas! shines nor moon nor star.
Where is the light
Which once did fill my life?

And suddenly Krishna's light doth shine in her heart.

"Nothing but Light I see! I see!" she says. She follows the light: she finds Krishna with beauty crowned. In humility and love doth Radha surrender herself to the Lord. And when she goes back to her place, she feels blessed. She says:—

How happy am I again!
For I have gazed again on his holy face:
I have recovered my lost jewel.
With the cord of love
I bind again his lotus-feet!

And again:—

There is a link of love
Uniting me heart to heart,
With the holy one.
How wonderful his love!
He plays upon his flute:
He sings and is filled with joy!

Krishna's Beloved

Rukmani is deeply devoted to Krishna. One dark night, she has a heart-to-heart talk with Krishna. It has rained the whole day long. The courtyard is drenched. The clouds roar at night. It is raining still.

Rukmani says to Krishna:— "O Krishna! thou art the Lord of my heart! Yet thou dost say that there are others who are devoted to thee with a love superior to what Rukmani offers thee. Krishna, tell me who loves thee the most!"

Krishna says:— "Rukmani! dear art thou to me, and thou hast served me well. But none I know can compare with the *gopis* of Vrindavan: and of all the *gopis*, Radha's love is the divinest. Radha's love is worship."

"Can it be so?" she asks herself. A feeling of jealousy stirs within her heart. She says to Krishna:—"O Krishna, I long to see the face of Radha who loves you so dearly!"

Krishna calls Udhava, saying:—"Do meet Radha and tell her, Krishna wants to see you without delay!"

Udhava starts immediately and is soon at Radha's door. What does he find? Radha is repeating the holy name of Krishna, careless of the outer world. Again and again, doth Radha

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cry:—"The storm is roaring : the rains are raining. But my temple, alas! is without its Lord." ……

Udhava meets Radha. He finds that her eyes are full of tears. He says to her:— "Radha! I come from Krishna!"

Radha says:— "How is my Lord? Tell him:— 'If I am proud, it is because of pride in thee: and if, indeed, I have beauty, it is but a ray of thy Beauty. Thy holy lotus-feet are ever in my heart!' "

Udhava says:—"Radha! I come from Krishna to tell thee he wants to meet thee without delay."

And Radha says:— "When Krishna calls, Radha will not wait!" And forthwith she starts.

Radha and Udhava arrive at Krishna's residence. Both bow down to the lotus-feet of the Lord. Rukmani gazes on Radha, again and again, with tear-touched eyes. She is wonder-struck. As the moon appears dim before the sun, so does Rukmani appear pale before the beauty of Radha : it is the beauty of the lotus in the night!

Then Rukmani brings rich presents and offers them to Radha, saying:— "Accept this humble token of my love for thee, Radha!"

And Radha says:— "What shall I do with these rich gifts? Beloved sister! richer than these is what my heart doth seek,—the joy of worshipping Krishna's lotus-feet and serving him, life after life. Bless me that this joy, which hath no ending, may be mine for ever!"

The hour arrives when Radha must return to her residence : she is loathe to leave Krishna.

She bows down in lowly reverence at the feet of the Lord. And he says to her:—

Radha! thy love is pure like sterling gold!
Let me serve thee and be blessed!
And know this, Radha!
I worship thee,
At dawn, at noon, at eventide.

Radha! within thee is the Atman, the Spirit.
The Atman is the real thou,
That have I loved from the ancient day!
I see thee, Radha, in and out!
And everything I see, is full of thee!
In joy I serve thee, Radha!
And beloved to me is Radha's name!

Verily, Krishna's love was the love of God Himself seeking the heart of His *bhaktas*,—devotees,—moving on as pilgrims to the shrine where Light doth shine from eternity to eternity. The great mystic, a poet and a *bhakta*, Chandidas, truly says:—

Verily, wonderful is the love of Krishna and Radha!
They are linked, heart to heart:
The twain are one!

The Heart of a Saint

Ramakrishna was with Mathur Babu : he was taking the Saint to Banaras. On the way, Ramakrishna crossed a village. He found poor people there and told Mathur Babu:—"Do feed them and give a piece of cloth to every one!"

Mathur Babu hesitated. "It would cost so much!" he said.

Ramakrishna said:— "Then I must not proceed to Banaras. Let me stay with the poor people here." And he moved and sat among them and wept!

Mathur Babu realised that he had grieved Ramakrishna's heart and ordered out, at once, bales of cloth from Calcutta : Ramakrishna was well pleased and exclaimed:— "This village is now sacred to me as Brindaban!"

Marvellous was Ramakrishna's love for the poor, the beggars and the outcast. How he served them,—served the very "lowest," served them with his own hands! He acted as a "scavenger," cleansing the Temple as a *bhangi*. He ate the fragments of the food given to the beggars who included outcastes and Muslims. He touched their feet in love and reverence, saying to himself:— "These be Thy Feet, Mother!" He said his hands, in touching the feet of the "untouchables," became "pure gold"!

Ramakrishna served as God doth serve His broken, bruised children. Ramakrishna served, yet never claimed to be a "Guru" or a "Teacher." He loved to call himself a "servant" of the poor and lowly,—a servant of "all human beings," of all "creatures." Verily, Ramakrishna was a Revealer of God. Singular in his humility and love, he *lived* religion. He lived the God-life, calling the Eternal Unknown as his "Mother Divine," and himself a little child whom his Holy Mother blessed in Her arms.

●

Tolstoy Re-Born

Tolstoy was born in a mansion having forty-two rooms: he died in a lonely room.

Wealth surrounded him. But when there came upon him the great change of his life,—I call it "re-birth in this birth,"—he stripped himself of his worldly goods and the luxury in which he was cradled. He wore the rough clothes of a peasant. He made his shoes with his own hands. He swept his own room. He ate simple food.

In his "Confessions," startling revelations are made. He tells us how, in his youth, he lived a "dirty, vicious life!" What sins are there he did not commit? The list of deplorable deeds includes drinking, duelling,—even murder! In his early years, he had revelled in pleasures of the married life. In later years, he strove to conquer the flesh. He tried to be a true disciple of Jesus. He became a saint of Holy Russia.

Tolstoy's *Diary* shows what a longing he had to devote his last days entirely to God. The Church in Russia, the Holy Synod, ex-communicated him. His books were not allowed in libraries. The priests called him "Anti-Christ": they asked the peasants to beware of Tolstoy and not eat his food! The priests threatened the peasants with fires of hell! But Tolstoy continued to teach that God is not a cruel, punishing tyrant, that God is Good, for God is Love, that He does not send to hell the unbaptised, that Humanity's true advance is along the Path of Love.

The last entry in his *Diary* is:—"To escape! To escape!" He longed for peace. He did not find it in his home. The tragedy of Tolstoy was in his marriage. He was a *rishi*, a sage : his wife was a society woman. She loved luxury : he was a prophet of the simple life. She loved riches: to him private wealth was a sin. She believed in force : he in the law of love. He and she were in constant clash. Is it a wonder, Tolstoy's home was turned into a hell?

His longing to escape the hell grew and, at the age of 82, he left his home, a prison of unhappiness. He fled from his wife into the cold and darkness of a lonely world. In a few days, he caught pneumonia and died at a wayside station-house. But to the last he retained his faith in the divine purpose of life. "God will arrange everything," he said before he passed on. And his last words were:—"To seek,—always to seek!"

First the Inner, then the Outer!

For years together, he dwelt in the forest, meditating and dreaming of the day when he would behold Sri Rama. And one day came to him the news that the Blessed One was coming to the forest. And the *bhakta* (devotee) was beside himself with joy.

And he left his little hut and moved out to meet his Master. He moved on for many days. And one day, he felt very tired. So he rested in a quiet, little place. He rested and meditated,—when suddenly Sri Rama stood before him. But he was absorbed in meditation. His eyes were closed : he did not see that before him stood Sri Rama whom he had longed to behold.

And Sri Rama spoke:— "Behold! I stand before thee, my *bhakta!*"

The *bhakta* answered not, moved not : the *bhakta* was absorbed in meditation.

Then Sri Rama entered into his heart. The *bhakta* saw his Master's Face in his heart, and then opened his eyes and saw Sri Rama before him.

Such is the law : first the inner, then the outer. See the Lord in your heart first. Then may you see Him in nature and history.

The Starving Gods

It was a time of chaos,—some said of "revolution."

I was in a village. In the evening, temple-bells rang calling men and women to worship. And around me I heard temple-talks on Shankara and *maya*.

And they asked me:— "Who are you?"

"I know not," I said, "who I am."

"Do you believe in the mosque or the temple?" they asked me.

"I know not," I said. "I only know that I am my brother's. And this, too, I know that salvation is neither in Kasi nor in Mecca. I only know that whether you go to the Ganges or to the Jamuna, you carry heavy fetters on your feet, if you have not love in your hearts."

"And where find you your God?"

I said:— "He is among the poorest, the lowliest and the least. In sun and shower is He, in toil and labour."

There is, I humbly submit, a holier music in silent service of the poor and lowly than in all the gorgeous chanting of temple priests. So many gods of gold in the temples! If you will truly worship them, melt them and pour out the gold in service of the starving, shivering gods of the earth.

Tennyson's Faith

Of Tennyson, the great English poet of the Victorian era, we read, that he was, one day, going round his garden in company with a friend. And as the two walked together, his friend asked him what he thought of Christ.

Tennyson walked on in silence until he came to a sunflower in the garden. The fine bloom of the sunflower was lifted to the sun.

Then the Poet pointed to the sunflower and said:— "What the sun is to this sunflower, Jesus is to my soul. He is the Sun of my Soul." ●

Twin Souls

Some years ago, there lived a man who was wealthy and refined, and he was purified by suffering and renunciation. And he married a woman who was, also, refined and of a spiritual type. The two were in tune with each other. In the love each had for the other, the two lived in each other.

When, one day, on a journey to her relatives, she fainted, his heart, too, seemed to stand still for a moment. And, on another occasion, when he pricked himself with a needle, she, too, felt it, though she was at a distance. And when she died, the two still lived in each other ! He heard her voice every day in his heart!

Love purified by suffering and selflessness made the two one!

Vastra-Leela

Draupadi was gifted with strange, mystic beauty: and she recognised Sri Krishna as the Lord and was his devotee.

When Dushasana, under orders of Duryodhana, seizes her and tries to remove her *sari* and so make her naked in an open assembly, she lifts up her heart to Krishna. She cries to him in affliction:—"Govinda! Keshava! O thou who can destroy all affliction, save me! O Mahayogi! I have taken refuge at thy feet. Come to my help! Guard me in this hour of my deep distress!"

And Krishna hears the *bhakta's* cry. Krishna leaves his seat and walks, bare-foot, to the assembly. Krishna shows *vastra-leela.* Dushasana removes one piece of cloth, but finds another covering Draupadi. He removes the second cloth, but finds a third is there already! So is veil after veil removed, but Draupadi is under protection. One cloth after another is removed in endless succession,—until Dushasana falls down tired, exhausted! Draupadi's honour is saved.

Krishna becomes the guardian of his *bhakta.* ●

Service before Samadhi

Narendra* said to Ramakrishna:—"Master! how happy I feel in *samadhi*! I forget this cruel world. I beseech you to let me remain in *samadhi*"

But Ramakrishna said:—"How can you? You are a vast receptacle of life. How can you wish to stay absorbed in personal joy, when the world is in suffering and pain? When the realisation becomes natural to you, by the grace of the Mother, then in your normal state you will realise the One in all beings, and you will do great things in the world. Won't you serve and uplift the humble and the poor?"

The words of the saint went into the heart of Narendra, and he resolved to be a servant of the people, a brother of the poor and lonely, a burden-bearer. Service before *nirvana* or liberation,—became henceforth his ideal.

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* Swami Vivekananda

Brother Jamshed

At the age of fourteen; Jamshed Nusserwanjee saw the agony of a cow being dragged to a slaughter-house, and he forthwith gave up meat-eating. He became a "vegetarian."

Jamshed, a Brother of the poor, became a Brother of the bird and the beast. Compasstion was the secret of his life. ●

"Am I Better than a Thief?

In a Chinese story, we read of an ex-soldier who is become a peasant. To his deep regret he finds that he never finds time to reflect or meditate: his days and nights are laden with heavy work.

One night, he dreams a dream in which he marries a rich girl, and finds time to meditate and acquire wisdom. And, growing in wisdom, he realises that to wear fine clothes and dine well and gather silver and gold, when around him are men and women and children who starve and are in tattered clothes, is, verily, to be a "thief."

And in sleep, he says to himself:—"I shall be a new man. Today, alas! I live in luxury when so many are in poverty. Am I better than a robber, a thief?"

●

A Muslim Vaishnava

One of the great *bhaktas* (devotees) of Sri Krisnha, in Sri Chaitanya's days, was a Muslim who adopted a Hindu name and is known, in Vaishnava literature, as Hari Das.

The Muslims of Navadwipa were deeply offended with Hari Das, for he was devoted to Sri Chaitanya. The Muslims carried their complaint to the *kazi*,—the Muslim magistrate of Nadia. The *kazi* issued an order, saying:—"Take this man, Hari Das, this renegade to the Muslim Faith, to the market of the town and there beat him hard and flog him, until he falls unconscious and is dead."

Hari Das was taken to the market-place. Blow after blow fell on this servant of God. He fell down, unconscious, for sometime. The Muslims thought Hari Das was dead. They took up his body and threw it in the waters of the Ganges. After sometime, Hari Das revived and swam back to the shore. Then Hari Das sang aloud the song of which he was very fond, the *kirtan*-song:—"*Hari bol ! Hari bol !*"

Singing thus, Hari Das came back to his cottage. The Muslims were frightened. "A miracle has happened," they said. "Hari Das was dead: Hari Das has arisen!"

Some Muslims went to his cottage and asked him to forgive them all. Hari Das continued to sing, and then fell into a swoon. After sometime he woke up. The very first words he uttered on waking up were:—"I am very happy. How sweet it is to suffer for Krishna's sake!"

Significant words these! Yes,—the man who comes from the heights of contemplation to the plains of active life and, mingling with men, tries to serve them, suffers much, for he enters into conflict with many. But, like Hari Das, he may well say:— "I am very happy. How sweet it is to suffer for the sake of my Master!"

●

Guru-Seva

Much of what passes current today as "knowledge" is proud. It lacks the humility that comes of fellowship with life and service of love. The student's conduct in the *ashrama* was inspired by a beautiful spirit of service. The pupil collected alms for the teacher and looked after his cattle.

Of Aruni, we read, that when a student, he was ordered to stop a breach in the water-course in his teacher's field : finding every other means fruitless, Aruni went so far as to throw his own body into the breach !

Sri Krishna, in Sandipa's *ashrama*, set a noble example in *Guru-seva*. For his Guru, Sandipa, Krishna brought fuel from the forest and water from the river and even cooked food from time to time.

Manual work was an integral part of education. The body had its part in the homage the pupil owed to God and the Guru. ●

The Mahatma and the Maharajas

One day, they asked Mahatma Gandhi to address a meeting. Gandhi stood up. There were Maharajas in the gathering. As Gandhi kept on speaking, the rich princes melted away, one by one, until nobody was left! And Gandhi said:— "Nobody but God, the chairman and myself remained, while I was speaking."

A few minutes later, the chairman, too, left. "Poor fellow," said Gandhi, "he must have felt very uncomfortable in that strange company."

●

Back to the Earth

In an ancient book we read of a servant of humanity,—a servant of the poor and lowly.

On the threshold of the heaven-world he stands, one day, when he hears a voice. It cometh from a corner of the earth. The voice says:— "In anguish am I. Is there none to help?"

And the servant says:—"Not for me the joy of *mukti* or the heaven-world. Back to the earth let me go, for a brother or a sister is in pain!"

A Strange Child

Nimai* was a strange child. He was a few months old when his father placed before him rupees, pice, grain, clothes, weapons and books, and told him:— "Child! pick up what you will!"

Quickly, Nimai placed his hand on one book,— the *Bhagavad Gita !*

The father, the mother and all others who were present were filled with joy and they exclaimed:— "Nimai will be a lover of Krishna!" ●

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* Sri Chaitanya

"I am an Intellectual!"

One day, Dr. Albert Schweitzer is hauling beams and planks. Suddenly, he catches sight of a negro in white suit and cries out:— "Hullo, friend! won't you lend us a hand?"

And the "educated" negro says:— "I am an intellectual : I don't drag wood about!"

"You are lucky," says the doctor; "I, too, wanted to be an intellectual, but didn't succeed."

Schweitzer writes:— "Had I any say in the matter, no student would be allowed to read and write without being apprenticed to some trade. No training of the intellect without simultaneous training of the hands." ●

The Happy One

A farmer who has lost fourteen oxen sees the Buddha in the forest seated cross-legged and with wondrous beauty and calm on his face.

The farmer says:— "It is good to be like unto this man : he loses no oxen ! And for him there never comes a man chiding him with debts and saying:—'Come pay! Come pay!' Therefore a happy man is he!"

Happy, indeed! For he, the Buddha, had found the secret in non-possession. He walked the way of self-renunciation. ●

Good for Evil

Jesus passed by a group of men who spoke evil to him, but he spoke good to them in return.

And someone said to him:— "Master! how is it that they speak evil to thee and thou speakest good in return?"

And the Master said:—"Everyone gives from what he possesses." ●

What Pictures are You Painting?

One day, an artist brings a beautiful picture to Tolstoy,—a picture of "The Last Supper." A moving picture this! Jesus is about to go from this world. He is about to take up the Cross. And before leaving, the Master meets his disciples.

In this picture, Jesus is represented as washing the feet of his disciples. What a lesson in humility! The disciples have been quarrelling among themselves as to who is the greatest in their midst. Jesus takes up a water-basin and washes the feet of his disciples. Jesus fain would teach them the truth:— "He is the greatest who is a servant."

The artist shows his picture to Tolstoy and wishes to know if he has painted well. Tolstoy looks at the picture and, after a few moments, says:— "If you had loved deeper, you would have painted better." The artist returns with the picture to paint better.

You all are painters. What pictures are you painting? If a brother was angry with you, did you give him anger in return? Did you meet unkindness with unkindness, or with good-will and patience? What have been your action pictures? And what have been your thought pictures? Your thought forms? Within you is the Master! What pictures of the Master have you been painting? If you loved deeper, you would paint better.

Some have been painting pictures of money and pleasure, forgetting the noble ideals of service and sacrifice. O, paint some pictures of the Master! Paint them in these two colours,—purity and love. In your waking hours and in your subconscious self, paint the Master's pictures. Paint them in purity and love. And you will be blessed.

●

Spread no Scandal!

Jesus said to his disciples:—"How would you act if you saw your brother asleep and the wind had blown his cloak off him?"

They said:— "We should cover him and conceal him!"

He said:— "Nay, you would uncover his nakedness."

They said:— "God forbid! Who would do this?"

Then said Jesus:— "Alas! one of you hears something about his brother, then adds to it and spreads it."

A Herald of God

One day, certain robbers fall upon St. Francis, asking him who he is. Francis says:—"I am the herald of the great King of Heaven."

The robbers fall on him with fury, and strike him with blow after blow, and then cast him into a ditch, filled with snow, saying:—"Lie thou into the ditch, thou herald of nothing, yet thou callest thyself a herald of God!"

But Francis minds it not. In the ditch itself Francis goes on singing the praises of the Lord with joy and gladness.

A Bride of Krishna

Standing on the roof of her house, one day, Mira sees a marriage procession and the bridegroom in the procession. The bridegroom is called "*dulaha*." Deeply impressed with the sight, Mira runs to her mother and asks:—"Mother! where is my *dulaha*?"

And Mira's mother says off-hand:—"Girdhara Gopal."

The word "*dulaha*" means not only "bridegroom" but, also, the "beloved."

From this day onward, Mira never forgets that her *dulaha*, the "Beloved," is Girdhara Gopal, Krishna! From this day onward, Mira regards herself as the bride of Sri Krishna ! And every day, she thinks of him : she builds an Image of Shyama from the dust of the earth and, sitting in silence, looks at the Image, again and again. Absorbed in the one thought, the one vision of Shyama, is Mira everyday.

Some days after this arrives in Mira's village a *sadhu*. He has with him a small Image of Girdhara Gopal. Mira sees that the *sadhu* worships this Image. And she runs to her mother, saying:— "Mother! get me that Image of Shyama."

The mother requests the *sadhu* if he would give the Image to Mira.

The *sadhu* says:—"Mother! Shyama is my *Ishta*, my Lord, to whom I offer daily worship. And wherever I go, I take this Image with me. Not for a single moment am I away from the Image. How can I give It to Mira?"

And Mira's mother reports to Mira what the *sadhu* has told her. At night, the *sadhu* has a vision of Sri Krishna in his sleep. Sri Krishna says to him:—"My devotee art thou : wilt thou not pass on My Image to Mira?"

And early in the morning, the *sadhu* comes to Mira's house and gives the Image to Miras' mother, saying:—"To Mira I give this Image,de my richest treasure,—for the Lord hath so order— me."

A True Patriot

Sonotoku, the great patriot of Japan, loved the peasants, the farmers, the poor ones. Sonotoku served his people from morning till night.

One day, a famine spreads over Japan. And Sonotoku, a true patriot, was sent for by the government. They said to him:—"So many are dying of starvation. Won't you take in your hands the work of relief? Please tell us what pay you will accept."

And he said:—"What pay? I want no pay. I want no power. I want opportunities to serve my beloved countrymen!"

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BANARAS

We All are One

Of the renowned Greek, Diogenes, we read that he was, one day, seen alone, absorbed in meditation. And in one hand he held a bone of a distinguished warrior and in the other he held a bone of an unknown, forlorn beggar.

So Diogenes taught the truth that the man distinguished and the man moving in poverty,—the beggar,—were fundamentally one. We all belong to one brotherhood.

"Am I not Their Brother?"

Moniya,— so they called Mahatma Gandhi when he was a boy.

One day, he was beaten by some boys in the compound of a temple near his house. He complained to his mother. She said to him:—"Why didn't you hit back?"

He said:—"Mother! how can you ask me to hit back? Am I not their brother?"

The Blessed Ones

In the crowd a woman said to Jesus:—"Blessed is the womb which bore thee and the breast which fed thee."

Jesus said to her:— "Blessed are those who have heard the Word of the Father and keep it! In truth the days are coming when you will say:—'Happy is the womb that has not brought forth and happy are the breasts which have not given suck!' "

"Jungle" Doctor

Many incurables are brought to Dr. Albert Schweitzer's Hospital at Lamberene (Africa). He serves them disinterestedly. He serves them untired, strong as ever in the presence of His Master. "If I cannot save them from death," he says, "I can at least show them love and, perhaps, make their end easier."

The number of his patients increases. He needs more beds and bed-frames. He is a doctor : he turns a carpenter and a labourer. He fetches wood and cuts it to the size required. He has faith in God and in human nature : and he has a sense of humour.

Labour is, indeed, an important item in his programme of work. He sits with the negroes and cuts wood required for his Hospital. In this intimacy of communion with the negro he wins their hearts. "I dare say," he writes, "we should have fewer difficulties with our savages, if we could, occasionally, sit round the fire with them and show ourselves to them as men."

This doctor of medicine, becomes, by turn an architect, a builder, a manual worker, and an educator. Manual labour, indeed, is an integral part of his programme in education. "How true it is," he says, "that civilisation does not begin with reading and writing but with manual labour!"

Pure Hands

One day, Guru Gobind Singh asked for a cup of water. A nobleman's son offered him water in a shining cup. He was a young man : he was handsome : his hands were clean. But the Guru returned the cup, and the young man looked wonderingly into the Guru's eyes.

Then said the great Guru:— "O young man! it is true, your cup is a shining one and your looks are handsome and your hands are clean. But they have not laboured in the service of the saints. Make your hands pure first ! And they will be purified through humility. Cast aside all caste-pride ! Be pure ! Be a servant of the poor ones ! And I shall drink of the water in your cup."

Go and Sin no More

A girl has fallen in sin. She comes to Krishna, penitent. He sees her tears.

"Come near!" he says to her.

She comes nearer : her tears fall on his Lotus-feet. He sits by her. With a piece of cloth he dries her tears and says:— "My child! thy sins are forgiven thee. Go and sin no more!"

Theologians frighten us with the thought that a sinner is thrown into hell-fire and it is never quenched! Krishna says:— "Repent! Repent! And you may quench the very fires of hell with a single tear!"

Krishna never taught that a sinner was condemned to endless punishment. Krishna taught that the sinner, too, was blessed by the God of mercy and love. For the sinner was but a "mask," a "shadow," which, when put off, reveals the Divine Essence of Wisdom and Beauty! ●

The Purifying Fire

There was a devotee of the Lord. She worked in the spirit of self-surrender. She built a small hut on a mountain. Her only companion there was a woman. She, alas! proved to be dishonest, malicious, untrue. She accused the devotee of hypocrisy and sorcery. Public opinion is so fickle. The majority of men do not think. Today, they applaud you : tomorrow, they stone you!

Public opinion forgot the devotee's good work. A wave of persecution started against her. She was abused, harassed, tormented. But she bore it all in absolute self-surrender to her Lord. And she prayed, every day, for them who persecuted her. She said:—"Lord! bless them!"

A friend asked her why she prayed for them. She said:—"They furnish the purifying fire to cleanse me of dross and become pure gold."

The day arrived when the wave against her vanished, and the people saw that the devotee was, indeed, "pure gold." ●

Physician of the Soul

The pharisees found fault with Jesus, saying to his disciples:— "Why doth your Master eat with publicans and sinners?" Jesus heard it and said:— "I am not come to call the just but sinners."

In a non-biblical story we read of how Jesus comes, one day, out of the house of a prostitute. And they say to him :— "Why does the Holy One of God come out of the house of a prostitute?" And Jesus says:— "They that are in health need not a physician but they that are ill. Go, then, and learn what this means."

Boatman's Song

It was a starry night and the waters of the river were mild. And I saw the Boatman sailing.

"Whither dost thou go?" I asked.

"To yon shore," he said: "there waits for me a brother whose foot is aching. He calleth me: will you, also, come?"

I entered the Boat and I saw it dash itself against the dark waves.

We reached the other shore : we saw a lamp burning in a red-brick house. And the Boatman asked the man who was ailing :— "How fare you, brother?"

The sick man smiled : his face was lit up with joy. He said:— "You have come : you have blessed me : you have half-healed me. There is no earthly treasure so rich as a simple word of love."

And I asked the Boatman : "Who taught you this one word which is the healing of human hearts?"

And he said:— "I learnt it in my meditation on a holy Song."

"What is its name?" I asked.

He said:— "It is called the *Bhagavad Gita*,— the Song of the Saviour."

"What is the teaching of the Song?" I asked.

The Boatman answered:— "The teaching is in this one little aspiration:—

O Thou, the Light of light!
Shine Thou in my heart
And make it pure
That I may serve the poor and broken ones
In the Love that sings and heals!"

Narendra and Ramakrishna

Narendra* had a reflective mind : he would not accept anything on hearsay. His later name, Vivekananda, is significant. His joy (*ananda*) was in *viveka* (discrimination): he followed the Light. And even as a young man, he realised that discrimination must be blended with purity and inner renunciation, if one is to live the true spiritual life.

Narendra was a young man when his uncle took him, one day, to see Ramakrishna. Narendra, as a college undergraduate, was under the influence of Western thinkers like Spencer and Kant, Fichte, Spinoza, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Comte and Darwin. Narendra did not understand Ramakrishna then. Sometimes, Narendra thought that the Saint was no better than a "monomaniac,"— "but not without greatness." "He may be mad, but he is worthy of respect." Gradually, Narendra began to see that Ramakrishna was a "past master in meditation."

Narendra kept his critical faculties awake : he was anxious to maintain his "independence." "I will not," Narendra said, "accept anything which my reason cannot accept." His attitude to the Hindu scriptures, too, was critical. He said to Ramakrishna:— "Even if millions of men believe in God, I will not say, I believe, if I have not proved it to myself!" "I desire absolute Truth, absolute Knowledge!" said Narendra to Ramakrishna.

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*Swami Vivekananda

But Ramakrishna never wavered in his love for Narendra. The love of the Saint made Narendra, at last, a believer and a *bhakta*. One day, Ramakrishna, in a semi-conscious state, came and quickly 'touched' Naren. A sudden change came upon him. The effect on him of Western rationalism was overcome. Naren no longer denied God. Naren passed through a series of mystic experiences, crying again and again:—"Shiva! Shiva!"

Naren's parents became anxious : was he ill ? Then, suddenly, Naren's father died, in 1884. Naren was face to face with the problem of looking after the family,— his mother and her five children. "I almost died of hunger," he says; "I wandered barefoot, from office to office : I was rejected on every side. I gained experience of human sympathy. I came in contact with the realities of life. I made the discovery that the world had no room for the weak, the poor, the deserted."

There were moments in that dark, starless period of his life when "the world," he says, "seemed to me to be the creation of a devil." He was faced with the cruelty of life. The doubting spirit awoke again in him, and he asked himself :— "Why does God allow so much suffering on the earth?" He spoke against God! He remembered the words of a great Bengali philanthropist :—"If, indeed, God is good and gracious, why do millions of people die for want of a few morsels of food?"

Some of Ramakrishna's disciples thought he was lost! But Ramakrishna continued to love him, continued to trust in him. "Ramakrishna," said Vivekananda at a later stage, "was the only one who had unswerving faith in me. His unshakable confidence joined me to him for ever. He alone knew the meaning of love!"

Narendra's struggle with poverty continued. One evening, when he had eaten nothing, he fell down, exhausted, in front of a house, on the roadside. It seemed to him that all the strength in him was gone out of him. His soul was torn in twain. And suddenly, he began to see : there was light! His doubts were solved and he exclaimed:—"I see! I know! I believe!" ●

Ye are Kings

Meister Eckhart was a thinker, a seer and a Rishi of the purest ray serene. And of him a pretty little story is told.

One day, as he is in his room of meditation, he sees before him the figure of a beautiful boy. And Eckhart says to him:— "Whence do you come?"

The boys says:—"I come from God."

"Where did you leave Him ?" asks Eckhart.

The boy answers:—"I left Him in the hearts of the pure."

And struck with the answer Eckhart asks:— "Who are you?"

"A king!" answers the boy with calm dignity.

"Where is your kingdom?" asks Eckhart.

"In the heart," says the boy.

Eckhart takes the boy to another room and says to him:—"Take from this room whatever coat you like."

The boy says:—"It will not be worthy of a king to take : a king must give!"

And the boy disappears!

The story enshrines a thought. Ye are kings! Every soul is royal. You are not the weak insignificant individuals you imagine yourselves to be. You are greater than you think you are. In you is a hidden *shakti*, an eternal energy. Express it, and you move the world. This *shakti* (energy) is expressed in the measure in which you are unselfish, disinterested.

You are kings. It is not worthy of a king to grasp : a king must give unselfishly. Give hope and strength and the sunshine of love to as many as you can.

●

Naked in the Sun

One of the disciples wished to go into the river for a bath. And the Master said to him:—"Give me your clothes!"

And the Master held the clothes in his hands. On finishing his bath in the river, the disciple said:—"Master! give me my clothes. I have finished."

And the Master said:—"My child! come out of the river and stand here naked in the sun!"

The disciple obeyed. Then to him the Master said:—"What a beautiful sunbath you have had! Naked you stand in the sun. Naked must you stand before the Sun of suns,— the Lord of the Universe. Naked must you stand, and artless."

Our clothes are an artifice to conceal our ugliness but only the artless can ascend the Mount that leadeth to Vision. And only he who losing his garments,—his guiles and artifices,—losing himself, doth lose his way,. again and again,— only he is welcomed on reaching his Home. True it is, in our glittering clothes we look smart and clever. But ired of lovers of tinsel are the angels who shine in the Light of the Spirit! ●

Death, too, is Beautiful

This evening, on the roadside I heard a woman,—the mother of a child,—crying a deep cry. Her child was dead! That cry went into my heart. And I said to myself:—That cry is but one of the million cries on this Earth where the very language of men is a cry and lacks the ring of joy.

And yet was not that mother's cry a cry of great illusion ? For if we but awake we may realise that death, too, is beautiful. For the passing of one form is but the birth of another. And every birth is beautiful.

Both birth and death are beautiful as both day and night are beautiful. The day has the beauty of strength. The night has the mystic beauty of darkness. The day reveals the sun : the night reveals the stars. Krishna's flute is beautiful but, also, the death of Socrates. ●

Pagal

"Pagal" they called him. And that word means a "fool." He was a "pure fool",—a fool in the Lord of Love.

In the heart of this Pagal was a wonderful love for all,—for men of different religions and diverse nations,—for men and birds and beasts.

He loved the very Earth he touched.

His father gave him money to open a shop and sell corn and make a livelihood. He realised that more than livelihood was life. He gave away corn gratis to the poor and needy. In a few days the shop was shut!

Little ones he loved : and to them he sang the Name of the Lord of Love. And they loved to hear Pagal's stories and songs!

Cholera broke out in his village : and Pagal went about, from door to door, with a chest giving medicines free and nursing the sick. Greatly was he blessed : for he cured those he nursed.

And he became the hero of the village-folk : and men and women came from many parts to have his *darshan*.

And he sang to all who came the sweet name of the Lord of Love.

And one day there came to him a learned pundit from a great university and spoke learned things of ancient and modern religions and then asked :—"O saint of God! What is your religion?"

And Pagal said:—"I am a *murkha* : little have I learnt from the books. But I have taken lessons at the feet of the Lord. And He has taught me a New Religion."

And the pundit asked:—"What is that New Religion?"

And Pagal said:—"It is not a ritual nor a creed. It is not a label nor an ism. The New Religion my Lord has taught me is to be a little one and to worship Him in little things."

And the pundit spoke no more, but went out wondering at Pagal whom the village-folk worshipped as a prophet and a saint of God! ●

The Man Enigmatical

He mingled in the crowd. They called him the "Man Enigmatical." In a modest, little cottage he lived. They respected him much. They came to him for medicines. And children received his smile and listened eagerly to his stories and songs.

He was not a man of many words. Once a week he met a special class, and in a quiet way spoke of several things. Here are a few of them gleaned by a disciple from two of his recent talks:—

Thou art not dust, nor wilt thou to dust return ! Awake, brother, awake! And see the splendour of thy diamond-heart!

Each day is lost that doth not rise as an offering to Thee, O Lord!

I would be a sweeper at the gate of the palace of my King rather than be the president of the Indian Republic. The honours of the earth are empty : the service of my King is the richest wealth of life.

The King of Beauty becomes Himself a Lover of him who loveth Him.

Aspiration is nobler than ambition. If you must have an ambition, let it be this,—to live in the Eternal Now!

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